

The Mildenhall Register

XV, XC, 149, 218 and 622 Bomber Squadrons' Association
Supported by Friends of 75 (NZ) Squadron

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2022/3



Front Cover

The top image shows the wonderful memorial stone that was installed in the Ribbon of Remembrance during 2022's reunion weekend.

Designed and created by stone mason Brian Downing, seen centre, top row, it was unveiled by Dee, top left, watched by all of us attending.

Top right we see Brian, flanked by Dee and Marshall Allen who conducted the short memorial service for us, standing proudly behind the stone.

A very big thank you to all those who contributed towards this magnificent and lasting memorial stone to all those who served on our squadrons.

Bottom left shows John Myhill and other members of 622 (Aux.AF) Squadron holding a separate ceremony of dedication for their memorial stone at the base of the magnificent spire that stands proudly over the whole site.

Bottom right is the amazing tribute to all those squadrons who took part in the 'Manna' food and supply drops over Holland. An operation that many of our own aircrew and aircraft participated in.

Roll of Honour 2022

Mrs	P	Pauline	Atkinson	Croydon	622	Widow of Peter Atkinson, 622 Sq. Navigator.
Mr	F	Frank	Chasemore	Claremont	XV	Cousin of Sgt. Dennis Ward Flt Engineer XV, KIA 7/8 August 1944
Mr	G	Geoff	Conacher	Frankston South	622	Pilot, Jan to May 1945.
Mr	W P	William (Bill)	Gould	Telford	622	F/E, F/Lt Rumble crew Dec '44 - May '45. 30 op tour completed. First Op Trier 21st Dec '44, last was gardening in Kattagat May 3rd '45. 2 Manna ops to Rotterdam and 4 Exodus Ops to Juvencourt.
Mr	F W	Frederick	Limer MBE	Epping	149	B/A BBU post war Nov 44- June 46. 1946-1948 Bomb Ballistics Unit, Martlesham Heath.
Mr	T	Terry	Mobley	Wimborne	37, 75, 149 & 214	Son of A B Mobley who served at Feltwell as pilot (F/Lt later W/Cdr) on Harrows and Wellingtons with a number of different squadrons. Was twice posted to 214 Sqdn. Tragically killed at a flying display in 1950, which Terry witnessed.
Mr	J E	Jim	Mulhall	Stockport	75 (NZ)	Ex W/O F/E Lancasters
Mr	M	Mike	Wells	Salisbury	75 (NZ)	Family of Roy Wells KIA 051044. Mike is ex RAF National Service. Mike used to help out at the Runnymede Memorial.

May they Rest in Peace. Obituaries can be found later in the newsletter.

Words from the Chair

Goodness, another year has come and gone and what ups and downs it's contained.

First off, in all of our thoughts are the veterans who have left us to go to the 'The last mess' and those veterans who are still with us. I know some are frailer than others and I am sure you will join me in wishing them the best. I am also thinking of the families of them all and send warm greetings to them too.

We all celebrated the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and then were deeply saddened by her subsequent death. Letters to the Palace were sent on both occasions which I am sure were greatly appreciated. I personally, was glad to have made the long walk to salute her at Westminster Hall. Our service personnel did her proud with their work on the ceremonial. We will continue to support our new King in his endeavours in learning his new job (though he had a great teacher) and coping with new family structures.

Having the Register reunion in May 2022 was gratifying with a chance to catch up with folks after 2 years. I know some people were unable to come due to attending other family events that had been put off for a couple of years because of Covid but we look forward to seeing many of you in 2023.

Unfortunately, due to matters that are out of our control, changes in how and where the reunion is held have had to be made. I assure you we will be working on making it an enjoyable event for you all. The hard work my colleagues on the committee put in, I know, is much appreciated.

I hope that you have had a lovely Christmas and that 2023 is an upbeat year for you all.

Dee

From The Treasury

Well, dear reader, here we are at the end of a more normal year (I am here ignoring the ridiculous goings on in the laughingly called 'Mother of Parliaments') and the start of what I hope is to be a more settled year for us all. I hope I find you well and in good heart and I wish you a happy, healthy and safe New Year.

The dedication for the Ribbon of Remembrance stone went very well indeed and I think everyone enjoyed the trip to the IBCC and were pleased with the service provided

Other than that it's been an uneventful year with the usual bumble over to St John's to lay the wreath by our plaque on the 11th November. We once again joined The Friends of 75(NZ) Sqn at Mepal for their Service of Remembrance at which I again laid a wreath on behalf of the Register.

Financially the year went very much as planned and we remain in a good situation.

The upheaval regarding the 2023 reunion has been mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter but it won't hurt if I iterate here. Due to situations beyond our control we have been forced to find alternative accommodation for the reunion. To this end a number of venues were investigated. Having narrowed the field down to three the committee rejected one for requiring a £2000 spend in the bar and another for having a room hire fee of £600 per night. This left the Bury Golf Club so Cherry and I paid a visit, had a long chat with the most helpful events manager and were generally most impressed with the surroundings, the service and food (as it was Cherry's natal day I very generously treated her to lunch there). In view of the disruption caused and also the dire financial situation the country finds itself in at the moment the committee took the decision to have just the three events, the AGM followed by the dinner on the Saturday and the Church Parade as normal on the Sunday. I can only hope that all this disruption is only temporary and that normal service will be resumed as soon as possible. It will be difficult, but I'm sure we can cope.

Well dear reader, if you've made it this far, that just about raps it up from ComSubGruFen1. Looking forward to seeing you all at the Reunion.

Smiley

Scribblings from your Secretary

Here we are again, yet another year has swiftly come and gone. So may I wish you all A Happy and Prosperous 2023 with no more nasty surprises or bugs around every corner.

We celebrated, with the whole Commonwealth, the extraordinary Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth. Later we mourned, with virtually the whole world, her passing and welcomed our new King, Charles III.

Amongst the veterans we lost this year, was our own Mildenhall Register Queen, Pauline Atkinson. Along with her late husband Peter and subsequently her son and daughter, she has been an attendee since the very beginning.

It was whilst the Jubilee celebrations were going on that I got to see the film 'Lancaster', the long awaited sequel to 'Spitfire'. This featured, amongst others, two of our veterans, the late lamented 'Chick' Chandler and Bill Gould. The very next day I received the sad news that Bill had gone to join his friend in the squadron in the sky.

Obituaries to Pauline and Bill and the others who have joined them can be found later on in this issue.

Again, sadly, world events and new base protocols have meant we have been unable to arrange the 2023 reunion on Mildenhall base as previously. Despite this, we, your committee, did not wish to bring things to an abrupt end and have worked hard to find an acceptable alternative at which we can discuss with you the way forward. More on this later. As I write, there is still some finalising to do.

So on to happier news now. We did manage our own Ruby celebrations, the 40th Reunion finally happened. A small, but distinguished, gathering were able to join in the base tour, AGM, visit to the IBCC (International Bomber Command Centre) at Lincoln, the service at Beck Row church and two meals. Those that attended thoroughly enjoyed the whole weekend. A report appears later on, with some pictures.

In other news, the Baumann family and friends, from Golaten, Switzerland, were finally able to come to East Kirkby, where father Fritz thoroughly enjoyed his taxi ride in 'Just Jane'. Joining us on the day were MR members Sophie, the daughter of the pilot and Malcolm, the son of the W/Op. Sophie was extremely lucky to get a taxi ride too, due to a cancellation on the day.

I was able to meet member Sandra LaClaire, from Regina in Canada. Who, with husband Fred, came to Nottingham to visit her daughter. I drove across and met them all, enjoying a lovely meal with Sandra and Fred. There must have been many former Bomber Command personnel who returned to live in Saskatchewan as Sandra keeps me and the IBCC busy with her reports and details of those who sadly pass away.

A chance meeting with a lady and subsequently with her partner in an hotel in Rome led to some in depth research into his father's service and survival. I am always happy to help anyone with research when they, like Jeremy, aren't at all sure where and how to search for information. Like so many others, Jeremy had left it far too late to find out all about his father's service. His survival, the only one of his crew from 44 (Rhodesia) Squadron Lancaster being down to him being the bomb aimer and right by the front escape hatch when their aircraft was hit. Jeremy too managed a trip to and taxi ride at East Kirkby later in the year.

As in the above enquiry, there have been others come to me by e-mail and through the website 'Help' button who need assistance to know about their family members who served with our squadrons. These are passed on to our dedicated squadron historians when it is beyond my scope to satisfy their enquiry. In this way, we've managed to help at least a dozen or more this year, some becoming new members.

I'm always looking for stories to go in the newsletter or on the website, so please do get in touch.

I have been advised of four veterans who have reached the 'ton-up' milestone in their lives. Geoff Hancock, a mid-upper gunner with L J Drummond's crew on 149 Squadron during 1942/3. His daughter tells us that he still lives independently and enjoys the newsletter when it comes out. She has sent in his life story, which I'll digitise and put on the website, with excerpts in here, as it's a great read.

The second, also a 149er, was Wallace Lee, who celebrated on the 10th December. He was a W/Op - A/G with F/Lt E Meadon's crew, completing a full 30 ops tour out of Methwold. We'd lost touch with Wallace a few years ago, so it was great when

his son got in touch. I'll be sending him the three newsletters he's missed out on, with this one.

Former Chairman, John Gentleman, was in contact to say that another 149er, Len White would be turning 100 on 23rd July 2022.

Last, but not least Al Lovatt, who will be 100 on 15th January 2023. Al was a bomb aimer with 149 Squadron. He recently lost his wife, making the Christmas period very difficult for him. Fondly remembered by all who knew them at Methwold and MR reunions.

So, are there any more out there from our other squadrons who've reached this amazing milestone in their lives? If so, I'd love to hear from you.

And so, on with the rest of the news and stories from this year, beginning with a report from Group Captain Dorian "Doz" James, OC 622 Squadron (RAuxAF) at Brize Norton. In such busy and uncertain times, I am grateful that he was able to spare the time to write this report.

It has been another frenetic year for 622 Squadron. As mentioned in previous Mildenhall Registers, 622 Squadron personnel remained exceptionally busy throughout the COVID pandemic on operations RESCRIPT and BROADSHARE, however we have come out the other side of the many lockdowns relatively unscathed!

We have had a good turnover of people leaving and joining the Squadron over the last year and we remain at about 84% of our full manning levels. Of specific note over the last 12 months, is the arrival of our first ATLAS A400M pilot. With the A400M taking over most of the capabilities from the Hercules C130, the hope is that we will have more individuals with A400M skills joining the Squadron in the near future. On the flipside to this is the withdrawal of the C130 from RAF service in 2023 after 50 years of being the true work horse of the RAF. This will be a sad time for the RAF Air Mobility Force and specifically 622 Squadron as the Squadron was formed from 1359 Flt to provide reservist support to the C130 Force.

The Squadrons support to MOD Global Operations has continued unabated, with many of our personnel providing support to operations around the World. We have also continued our support to the UK Defence Exercise Programme, with 622 Squadron personnel operating around the World. Of specific mention are the parachuting exercises in California and Norway, continuing support to the VIP Voyager aircraft on Operation VESPINA, and providing air to air training for the Voyager Force to expand their capabilities. We also have had Squadron working at distance, operating from both North Africa and New Zealand.



The easing of the COVID restrictions has allowed the Squadron to start a return to an increased social timetable. Once again the Squadron was privileged to attend the Bomber Command memorial in May. As officer commanding, Wg Cdr James laid a wreath on behalf of the squadron.

Members of the Squadron also enjoyed the Mildenhall register weekend.

(During the visit to the IBCC as part of our Saturday outing.)

Flight Lieutenant John Myhill also led a Force Development trip to Europe in October. As part of Exercise NACHT UILEN

MANNA, the aim was to commemorate the Battle of the Scheldt, Op MANNA and the end of WW2 in Europe. Op MANNA was a humanitarian relief effort that saw the RAF using some of their heavy bomber force to drop food to the starving people of the Western Netherlands from 29th April to 8th May (VE Day) 1945. RAF Brize Norton's 622 participated in this wartime operation. It was a thoroughly well planned event that was both educational and enjoyed by all that managed to attend the event.



The Squadrons relationship with its London City Worshipful Company of Arbitrators continues to grow. The Squadron provided a day at Brize

Norton where company personnel had a brief on the RAF, Air Mobility Force, RAF Brize Norton and 622 Squadron. The visitors also had an opportunity to hone their flying abilities



in both the C130 and A400 simulators. The Company also awarded their Blondie Swales award to Squadron Leader O'Brien for all her hard work in setting up 622 Squadron. For the first time this year, the Blondie Swales award will have the winning recipient having their name inscribed onto the 622 Squadron new piece of silverware (the Squadron emblem of the Owl holding a lightning bolt).

The Worshipful Company of Arbitrators also has affiliations with both the Navy and Army units. 622 Squadron took the opportunity in the last year to directly affiliate itself with the Navy's HMS MERSEY. The ships company were kind enough to hold the first bilateral visit when alongside at Portsmouth, with 622 Squadron reciprocating during its affiliation day in August.

(With John Myhill spending a period in the army a while ago and now the Squadron is affiliating with the Navy, it appears to be becoming a truly multi service fighting unit! Ed)



On a sadder note, unfortunately the Squadron lost one of its personnel this year. Squadron Leader Stu Avent lost a short battle with Leukaemia in September. As a Hercules navigator, he operated the aircraft in every conflict area over 4 decades. On completion of his flying career, he became a Human Factors specialist, who with an innate passion for the role, becoming 1 of only 3 Royal Air Force accredited instructor assessors in the subject. Although part-time, he travelled to support many different sectors all around the country. Including to the Medical environment and, following successful briefings, he undertook training for the military and NHS staff at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham. Such was his talent, he was regularly requested by joint Military and NHS Medical units across the country as well as by various Police Forces.

On a lighter note, one of our Squadron Voyager cabin crew. Corporal Hayley Court, who last year won Reservist of the Year continued her impressive fundraising campaign called Healing Military Minds, raising funds for Combat Stress. In addition to organising a climb of Snowdon and some other activities, she masterminded the organisation of an autumn ball with over 300 guests. To her credit she has raised over £60,000 over the last 2 years.

Wishing Register families and friends a merry Christmas, happy New Year and a prosperous 2023!

Kind regards

Wg Cdr D J James OC 622 Sqn RAF Brize Norton

Obituaries of members we have lost this year.

PAULINE ATKINSON *(For which I am indebted to her wonderful family)*

Pauline died at peace, aged 99, with family beside her on 26th January 2022 in a Tonbridge Care Home. She is an honorary veteran of the Mildenhall Register and attended most annual reunions. At first with husband Peter and, after his death in 2005, with son Tony, his wife Carol, and daughter Sue Curtis.

Pauline met Peter at a dance in Selsdon, Surrey on 11th October 1941 whilst he was training in the bank. She travelled through wartime bombings by train to London where she worked as a typist in the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in Soho. Peter joined the RAF and trained at the Central Navigation School, Rivers, Canada from October 1942 to March 1943. He was sent to Harrogate and later to Wrating Common for a conversion course to Stirlings but never flew them on ops.

Pauline and Peter were engaged on 7th September 1943 before he was transferred Mildenhall in February 1944. He was a flight sergeant navigator on ED474 'Bat out of Hell' Lancaster Bomber with 622 Squadron at Mildenhall on 31 night-time ops from March to July 1944. Important missions were to Berlin and other cities, but many were in France on flying bomb bunkers and U-boat pens and inland around D-Day to disrupt Nazi advancement and retaliation. Pauline wrote daily letters to Peter and her memories of the time included her thrill at his leave days and the outings and films that they enjoyed. She also recalled Peter's story of a visit to the airfield by the King and Queen when airmen held the popular Queen on their shoulders to the consternation of senior officials!

Pauline and Peter married on 10th February 1945 with friends rallying with rations, a cardboard cake, a borrowed dress, a red carnation bouquet and a black cat charm, with Peter looking stunning in his RAF uniform. Peter continued in the RAF until his demob in 1946. He was an instructor and flew to India/now Pakistan with Transport Command to return troops home.

Peter and Pauline are remembered for their generosity and hospitality to friends and family. They represented the Register at the inauguration of the Lachalade Memorial in L'Argonne, France in May 2003 for the lost Stirling EF128 from which there had been one survivor, Bob Harper the bomb aimer, who was rescued by the Resistance. Pierre Valiadis was presented with La Croix du Combatant Volontaire 39/45 at the ceremony.



Pauline believed in the power of a smile and carried it with her in troubled and joyous times. In her last days, as other faculties failed, she retained her sight and beamed at family and carers with all the warmth and welcome with which she will always be associated.

(It will be her smile that I and many others, I'm sure, will remember her by. Ed)

Flying Officer Geoffrey Conacher RAAF

It is with great sadness that I report the death of Flying Officer Geoff Conacher RAAF on 20th November 2022.

Geoff was a pilot and his crew flew 15 operations at the start of 1945, finishing the war with seven Exodus trips to repatriate POW's from France.

The crew's first operation proved to be very eventful as Geoff himself described to the author:

The target was a daylight trip to Monchengladbach (01/02/45) bombing with the aid of G/H radar. The crew were assigned Lancaster HK617, GI-Q for their first mission over enemy territory. Rather unusually I had not completed a '2nd dickey' trip with an experienced pilot prior to this mission, an oversight in retrospect that could have prevented the aircraft from crashing. Geoff Conacher describes in his own words what occurred:

"The aircraft we were allocated had provision (a hole in the floor between the mid upper and rear turrets) for a .5 machine gun, requiring a spare gunner to be carried. Sergeant Edward Baxter was assigned to the crew for what would have been his thirtieth and final mission.

Shortly after take-off and before crossing the coast, we noticed a small oil leak on the front edge of the port main plane at the inner engine. The engine was behaving perfectly so we continued. As we progressed the leak began spreading slowly over the wing. The flight engineer could detect no fault, but it was becoming worrying, although we were still keeping our position in the stream. However, over Europe the situation quickly worsened, with the main plane covered, and oil now hitting the rear turret, we began to lose our position in the stream. Before long, we were 3000 feet below the stream and falling behind. I made the decision to turn back about 20 minutes before the target and feather the engine. When this was attempted the propeller ran away, so with the engine shut down the propeller then began to windmill at around 4000 r.p.m. The aircraft soon began to vibrate excessively and despite efforts to reduce the wind milling, flames were seen to be coming from the port inner. Attempts to douse the fire were not successful. Our main fear was, of course the fire, and this quickly spread to the fuselage.

The aircraft was now becoming increasingly difficult to control, and after we had crossed into liberated France, I decided to abandon the aircraft, and advised the crew accordingly. We all landed at a place in France called Vitry en Artois near Rheims. The normal drill was for the two gunners and the wireless operator to leave by the back door. Because we had the extra gun, however, it was ok for the mid-under gun to be jettisoned, and the three gunners and the wireless operator, leave

through the floor. The mid under gunner had difficulty in jettisoning the gun despite assistance from the others. I instructed them to stop trying and use the back door. They advised they were in position (last one out maintains contact with the pilot). I gave the order to jump. I could view the back door from my seat, and when I saw no one was left, I called up on the intercom and there was no answer. I assumed everyone had gone and proceeded to follow the bomb aimer, navigator and flight engineer out of the front hatch. When we met up on the ground we quickly learned that Sgt Baxter was dead. It was revealed by the others that he seemed reluctant to leave by the rear door, obviously because of what appears to be the uncertainty of striking the tail plane.

Unfortunately, Sgt Baxter must have returned to his gun position in the floor and again tried to jettison the gun. Because of the main spar, that gun position cannot be seen from the pilot's seat and with no intercom response, I made my exit. Sgt Baxter appeared to have jumped eventually, but it was seen by people on the ground that his parachute was on fire. It was a tragic episode, and although we, as a crew, did not really know him, he has never been forgotten.

It could be said that the flight engineer and myself, for that matter, should have realized the oil must have been coming from the constant speed unit. However in our defence, it was our first trip, my mechanical knowledge was, and never has been great."

A few years ago Geoff and his lovely wife Marion came over to a Mildenhall Reunion where he met up with his flight engineer, Frank Hogan. I will always remember listening fascinated to Geoff & Frank catching up after many years.

Geoff once again made the trip over to the Bomber Command Memorial dedication in 2012.

Howard Sandall

Flight Sergeant William (Bill) Gould

Bill Gould a former flight engineer with No. 622 Squadron sadly passed away on 4th June 2022

After completing his flight engineer training at St Athan, Bill joined the crew of Flying Officer Malcolm Rumble RAAF arriving at RAF Mildenhall in December 1944.

Bill and his crew commenced operations on 21st December completing mainly daylight operations with the aid of G/H radar. Perhaps the most infamous operation for the crew was on 13th February to Dresden. The raid became infamous and used as a political tool to berate the crews of Bomber Command. ACM Bomber Harris was vilified by many for his political perspective to end the war quickly, Dresden was a legitimate strategic target. No recognition or memorial was built to the 55, 573 who lost their lives serving in Bomber Command for 68 years.

During May 1945 Bill and his crew dropped food parcels to the starving Dutch population during Operation Manna and then he took part in Operation Exodus to repatriate POW's from France back to the UK.

In June 2012 an injustice was corrected when the Bomber Command Memorial was opened in Green Park London. A wonderful memorial to the brave crews who lost

their lives in WWII. Bill was very proud to have served in Bomber Command, the bond he formed with his crew lasted a lifetime. When Bill was asked to deliver a speech at a later annual memorial service in Green Park he jumped at the chance and delivered his passage from the bible impeccably.

Shortly before his death Bill was asked to be part of the Lancaster feature length film on this wonderful aircraft. The film was released shortly before he passed and will last as a perpetuating memory of Bill. After 78 Years the emotion in his voice gave away his pride and enormous affection for his association with the Avro Lancaster.

A lifelong member of the Mildenhall Register Association, Bill will be greatly missed at the annual reunions especially his infectious laugh.

Per Ardua ad Astra.

Howard Sandall

Fred Limer MBE

Fred joined the RAF as an Observer but by the time his training was completed in Canada he was re-allocated to be a Bomb Aimer. Many Observers at this time had been re-allocated, either to Bomb Aimer or Navigator, both disciplines of which they had been trained in as Observers. He eventually reached 149 (East India) Squadron at their base in Methwold and started on Operations in early 1945 as a Flight Sergeant. More Operations followed before getting involved in the Manna and Exodus Operations. He was also active in the Revue flights which were to map various areas. A lot of the Revue flight pictures are still available from the National Archives at Kew. After the war Fred continued in the RAF until 1948.

After leaving the RAF Fred went into a successful Sales and Marketing career, eventually being elected a Councillor for Epping Urban Council. Much advancement and work in the field of Housing followed with various bodies.

A good life, well lived. Rest in Peace, Fred.

Fred recorded his story for the IBCC. It is available at: - "Interview with Frederick Limer · IBCC Digital Archive (lincoln.ac.uk)"

Alan Fraser.

Terry Mobley Terry was a very enthusiastic member of the MR, attending numerous reunions until his health began to suffer. We became good friends during that time and we would often chat on the phone or he'd send me interesting RAF related or sundry other, flying related, information by e-mail.

He was immensely proud of his father's long and distinguished career with numerous squadrons in the RAF. Often going up to Feltwell, reminiscing, taking photographs and talking to the children in the school there.

It seemed so sad to me that his father had survived the war, so many tours of duty, only to be killed in a flying accident witnessed by his wife and nine year old Terry. A pilot himself and I've seen numerous pictures of aircraft he flew in. He liked to 'Hop across the Channel for luncheon' with his other flying mates, just for the fun of it.

You can fly anywhere now old friend. RIP. (Ed)

Jim Mulhall (Obit. courtesy of Kevin King, Friends of 75(NZ) Squadron Chairman)

Jim started his tour on 5-8-44 as flight engineer with the Hugh Rees crew. John was made P.O.W. with the rest of the crew on their 33 operation on 20-11-44. (This was a daylight raid on the Oil Refinery Plant at Homberg. Results of bombing could not be observed, but it is considered that the raid was unsatisfactory. One aircraft AA/J returned early owing to icing trouble and two aircraft bombed last resort targets at Duisburg and Hamborn. Three aircraft failed to return. One being



Lancaster Mk.III PB520 AA – G, (that of Jim Mulhall). They were all simply recorded as being captured as prisoners of war. Jim's P.o.W Number: 1252; P.o.W Camps: Dulag Luft, Stalag Luft III) Extract from List of Prisoners of War | 75(nz) squadron (wordpress.com) website, with thanks. Ed.

In the picture of the crew (above) including some ground crew, Jim is front & centre.

Jim endured the Long March of P.O.W's during the sever winter of 1945. Finally being released in May 1945.

Jim enjoyed a happy family life and kept in touch with his former crew members. We were pleased to see Jim at our reunion in 2014 when he and fellow P.O.W. John McFarland, laid the Squadron wreath at the Memorial Garden at Mepal. A kind and unassuming man, he will be greatly missed not only by his family, but all those that knew him.

AKE AKE KIA KAHA.

Mike WELLS

Was a former National Serviceman in the RAF. Before moving to Salisbury latterly, he was an enthusiastic volunteer at the Runnymede memorial site.

He was related to Sgt. Roy Albert Wells, RAFVR 1802473 an Air Bomber with 75(NZ) Squadron. Roy was killed in action, age 21, on the 5th of October 1944. Thirty one aircraft took off as detailed to attack the railway centre at Saarbrucken. They all reached the target area but only fourteen bombed before the Master Bomber issued instructions to abandon the mission. Bombing appeared scattered, and the raid was unsatisfactory. The aircraft, Lancaster Mk.III ND904 AA-B "Target for Tomorrow Night" captained by NZ 427481 F/Sgt A Galletly, failed to return.

The full crew being: -

F/S Alan Russell Galletly, RNZAF NZ427481 – Pilot.

F/S Stuart Edwin Mosley, RNZAF NZ426106 – Navigator.

Sgt. Roy Albert Wells, RAFVR 1802473 – Air Bomber.

Sgt. Reginald Samuel Hond, RAFVR 1214443 – Wireless Operator.
Sgt. Peter Eric Tuthill, RAFVR 2211929 – Flight Engineer.
Sgt. Arthur Kitchener Sutton, RAFVR 1816276 – Mid Upper Gunner.
Sgt. John Peter Cooke, RAFVR 1816385 – Rear Gunner.

ND904 collided with Lancaster PD344 from 115 RAF Squadron over Wolsfeld, Kreis Bitburg, NW of Trier, Germany. There were no survivors on either aircraft. All crew members were initially buried in the Wolsfeld Churchyard but later re-interred in the British Military cemetery, at Rheinberg (North West of Duisburg)

(My grateful thanks to <https://75nzsquadron.wordpress.com/w/> for this information.)

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Now onto other stories from the year.

Former XV Squadron Buccaneer Navigator at Laarbruch Bryan ‘Pidge’ Holme, whose father was an A/G with 75 (NZ) Squadron during the war, got a lucky surprise at the beginning of 2022. Whilst doing some unrelated research, I came across a photograph of his Father’s crew, albeit with some unidentified at the time, including, it turns out Pidge’s Dad. *(Picture courtesy of <http://www.flensted.eu.com/> via Wings over New Zealand & 75 Sqn Association)*

Left to right:- unknown, Ground Crew, Bomb aimer Sgt Ross Cameron Buckley RNZAF NZ411206, Ground crew Tom McGibbon “Mac” RAFR 997826, unknown *(now identified as Pidge’s Father)*, Air Gnr. Sgt Malcolm E.J. Shogren, unknown, Navigator Sgt Desmond Ray Ross RNZAF NZ42341, Wireless Operator Sgt William Leslie Fred Brian RNZAF NZ411737.

When I contacted Pidge with this information he sent the following two replies: -

“Many, many thanks for the link taking me to the info, on the loss of my Father over Denmark in 1943. I do have a fair amount of detail from cuttings and a register of allied aircrew buried in Denmark during WW2.

Particularly poignant for me is the photo of some of the groundcrew and aircrew, for the unidentified aircrew in the centre of the photo (just right of the roundel) is my Father. This is only the second photo I have of him in uniform and now I have one of him in his flying kit.

This I will try to get copied and framed to go alongside his logbook and medals under my large Stirling Print.



A point of interest is that I believe the other unidentified aircrew at the left end is Sgt.Flt.Eng.George L Lennox.”

“.....I think the reason they were unnamed on the original photo is that they were the only RAF members of the crew, the rest being RNZAF.

After the crew were presumed KIA I met Sgt. Lennox's family for they lived in Blackburn and travelled down to Wigan to meet my Mum and I, bringing some photos of George with them and although I was only 10+ I am sure that he is the A/Crew in the photo.”

The tall, dark-haired gentleman, also unidentified in the list has to be the pilot; P/O Douglas V Hamer, aged 24 from London. It's the only crew position left with no name.

Before I get into a short piece about the reunion last year, I'd just like to share this snippet from an American who served on the base in 1972. He joined us this year, as a member, the only former serving US personnel we have. Those who came along will surely remember him, Steve Warren and his lovely wife Deborah. Steve wrote this when applying for his tickets: -

“In a few words, there is honestly nowhere on this earth more dear to us, than the Mildenhall area. Mildenhall AFB was where I brought my then just turned 18 year old new bride Debbie, exactly one day after we married in Lancaster, Pa. in early October, 1972.

In 1970, I was assigned to the 513th TAW, as an A1C Aircraft Mechanic, and in 1971 met Deb at a American football game at our high school, when in our red rose city and our (as stated above), mutual home town of “Lancaster” Pa (named for “Lancaster”, England). 😊

On England itself - It was at Mildenhall, where we spent our very first storybook honeymoon years! What memories for both of us... So, the “entire time while there” - was so incredibly magical for us.

We celebrate 50 years together this year, as the MR event does its 40th. We were just joking that our return again to England is “going back to the scene of the (Oct 1972) crime “! 😊

I know Steve and Debbie had a great time, as we've communicated numerous times since. He has sent in his full service career to read, including his time in Vietnam. The horrors of wartime operations hadn't changed much in that time.

So, last year's reunion kicked off for 25 attendees with a new base tour. We boarded the coach to be whisked through security and taken to the far side of the airfield, the home of the 100th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. The young personnel there were so enthusiastic about their work and eager to show us what and how they kept their charges in the air and combat ready at all times. Bearing in mind that some of the aircraft they are working on were 'born' just five years after I was. The

one on the ramp that day being manufactured in 1959! Admittedly, some of it is like Trigger's broom, but it's still going strong.

We were given access to an area where new parts are manufactured, to replace damaged or out of date pieces. What they can't get 'off the shelf' we were told they can make it. They were all very skilled, and enjoyed being able to 'show off' to us mere mortals.

Moving along we went to a training and refresher set-up for the maintenance engineers. This consisted of a large aluminium gantry in a room. There were sensors all over the gantry and a TV screen depicting the aircraft, The 'trainee' stood inside the gantry area and, by using a 3D headset and hand controller could actively move around the aircraft checking whatever was on the list. The amazing part of this was that he could be inside the fuselage one moment, then, with the click of a button on his hand held controller, pass through the 'skin' of the aircraft and be on the roof or top of the wing. Fascinating to watch.

From here we went into another simulator room where the crucial de-icing of an aircraft could be demonstrated. There was a chair, replicating the cab on one of their de-icing machines, the operator wearing the 3D goggles, then operating the spray boom. What was happening was displayed to us on a TV Screen. It looked so easy and a couple of 'volunteers' each had a go, to find that it wasn't that simple!

The next stop was the bar and crew room of the 351st Air Refuelling Wing for a briefing by base historian Rob Paley. What Rob doesn't know about the history of the base, its squadrons and use through from wartime until the present day really isn't worth knowing. His delivery was very smooth and entertaining, something he has much practice at, as he briefs all new personnel coming on base! I shall be working closely with him as time goes by as I often get US enquiries about the base and personnel who have served there.

Then it was out to the hanger, where the maintenance crews were working on this lovely 63 year old aircraft, with its new and much improved engines. On one of which, the nacelle was opened wide, so we could see all the pipework and mechanicals. There's not a lot inside one of these, it was quite a surprise to me. We were also allowed access inside, a great thrill for some, who'd not experienced this before. Mrs Humphreys in particular got to lay in the boom operator's position, where her father had once served.

From here we were taken back to our hotels in time to change and get back on base for the evening meal and AGM. Both meals and the AGM took place in the main Middleton Hall this year as the numbers were so low. The main room was just the right size, making it a cosier feel to the proceedings and we didn't need to move to the Lancaster room for the AGM.

When the future of The Register came up for discussion, the majority feeling from the floor was that we should keep it going, as long as members were prepared to come along and the base was able to support us. Although, with dwindling numbers of attendees, we were unsure how few the base would be prepared to support. The decision was taken and voted on that we should go for another reunion in May

2023. (As you'll no doubt be gathering from previous items and will find out details in a later article, this, unfortunately has not be possible to arrange. Ed.) Anyway, it was time for a fairly early night as we needed to be up early in the morning to get to the International Bomber Command Centre in Lincoln.

Saturday morning dawned bright, clear and warm. It got hotter as the day went on. Debbie and I went off ahead of the coach as advance party in case any of those joining the reunion party and those from 622 Squadron arrived before the coach. As it was there was very little difference in arrival times.

John Myhill and the contingent from Brize Norton, including their padre and F/S Dave Lewis from 99 Squadron held a separate commemoration beneath the huge spire to honour members of the squadron who were killed in action during the war and a dedication of their Ribbon of Remembrance stone. We were all invited to join them prior to the unveiling of our wonderful new memorial stone. Incidentally, this is immediately opposite the 622 Squadron stone on the pathway. Marshall Allan, a 75(NZ) Squadron family member and lay minister led our ceremony, whilst Dee unveiled the stone, hidden beneath an RAF flag.

The photographs on the front cover show what a lovely day the weather provided for this outing. A luncheon had been arranged in the marquee there, beside the RoR, which was very tasty and enjoyed by all. Brian Downing, the designer and mason of our stone gave a short presentation about his work which was very interesting.

There was then time for everyone to wander around the many walls where their relative's names and those of their crews are cut into the metal work. It proved a little difficult in some cases to find crew names, as I found out, because of the layout. But once you understand the way the walls are laid out, it becomes much easier. (*A little advice if you choose to visit. Ed.*) As it was initially the Lincolnshire Bomber Command Centre, the first set of walls are solely for those lost from Lincolnshire squadrons. On becoming the International BCC, the names of all the other serving losses were added around the back of the Lincolnshire ones.

Leaving everyone under Dee's capable command, Smiley, Cherry, Debbie and I slipped away early to ready the Middleton Hall for the evening dinner. This year there would be 38 members, nine from 622 Sqdn, the Australian Air Attaché's representative and a number of US personnel from Team Mildenhall, who assist us every year in putting the whole event on. Again, the setting was just perfect for the numbers attending. The staff and food were wonderful, once again and a thoroughly good evening was had by all. Dee managed a flawless 'round-the table' welcome to new and old guests alike. There was a lovely 40th anniversary cake, designed and cooked by our local café which was cut and consumed post meal.

The evening ended with new friendships made and a great deal of bonhomie.

Sunday saw us gather as usual at the lovely little church of St. John's, Beck Row. There was a short wreath laying ceremony at the memorial to those who served at Mildenhall behind the church before the main service, presided over by Rev. David Butcher. Geoff Denness kindly paraded the Standard for us again at both events.

Once more we included the hymn written by Rodney Pope, a XV Squadron tail-gunner in the service. One of quite a few crew members who went 'into the cloth' following their wartime experiences.

Finally, the weekend drew to a close with a wonderfully tasty buffet in the church hall, organised by the ladies of the church and village. It's always a great way to finish the weekend. Much appreciated by those with long distances to travel home and a final chance to say 'goodbyes' until next time.

REUNION 2023 As you'll have no doubt gathered by now, this isn't going to be the same as previous years. After numerous approaches to the base, both US and RAF Commanders have been unable to authorise access to us for the coming year. There are a number of reasons for this, not least the unrest in Ukraine, which is seeing huge demands on the workload of the largest refuelling asset the USAF has in the European theatre. As a committee we have not even been allowed on base to discuss anything, nor have we been made aware if this will be temporary or a permanent arrangement. Recent news in the press that the US are moving its European combat readiness Head Quarters from Alconbury to Fairford might also have further impact on this. Whatever the tactical and security reasons behind all this, we have not, rightly, be appraised. So, for the time being, we thank all the Commanders, past and present, of RAF Mildenhall who have been so accommodating in allowing us access, visits, tours, dinners and services on their base and in their chapel and look to do something else.

The plan is to follow the lead that Friends of 75(NZ) Squadron has used for a number of years, but keep it as local to Mildenhall as we could. When it finally became obvious we wouldn't be able to have a reunion on base, Smiley and Cherry did a huge amount of research into a suitable civilian venue. Our grateful thanks to them for this hard work. Initially choosing establishments in close proximity of Mildenhall, they were somewhat surprised at both the cost and the 'hidden extra' demands that were made.

Moving further afield, but not too far, they found a very obliging host at Bury St. Edmunds golf course. A reasonably priced hire and menu, with no hidden extras. (*Smiley and Cherry would thoroughly recommend the food as they just had to sample it on your behalf. Ed.*) The only proviso is that we have a minimum of 30 attendees. The venue is a cashless one, so please be prepared to pay by card at the bar. We just about managed that last year and we'd hope that many more of you can join us again this year for this simplified reunion. The quoted price for the hire and chosen menu is £30. Should the current financial situation worsen and the price have to rise, the MR Treasurer has said the funds will allow us to subsidise any increase. There will be no Saturday visit, nor, of course, will there be a base visit. We shall, of course, hold our annual wreath laying and service of Remembrance at St. John's, Beck Row on the Sunday.

For accommodation, there are a number of options, especially if you book early. By choosing the 13th -14th May weekend we will be missing Newmarket racing, so all venues locally shouldn't be under pressure. The Travelodge at Barton Mills is about

10 miles from the golf club and less than four miles to Beck Row church. There are other venues in Mildenhall, if you'd prefer.

Alternatively, there are numerous hotels and guest houses in Bury St. Edmunds, with even town centre accommodation being just three miles from the golf course and between 15 and 20 miles, depending on route taken, to Beck Row church. The choice, as they say, is yours.

We hope you will be able to join us and help commemorate those who have served on our squadrons once more. Who knows, if it is a success, we may well make this last another 40 years!

Jo Herrold has been a long-time member of 75(NZ) Squadron association. This year, she asked to join the Mildenhall Register and provided this background information about her father's attempts to join up and her involvement and life.

My Kiwi father initially wasn't permitted to join up as he was a farmer, a key worker. He persisted and eventually joined the RNZAF. He trained as a Navigator with the RCAF at No7 Air Observer School, Portage La Prairie, Manitoba in Canada. On completing the course, he was posted to Mepal, August-Dec 1944. He apparently did 31 ops, as someone had miscounted!

Anthony Charles John HERROLD, Navigator served in F/O Edmund Frederick Robertson's crew, along with F/O Stuart Hector Richmond, Air Bomber; F/S Frank Rendall Tibby, Wireless Operator, all Kiwis. The rest of the crew were from the UK. Sgt. C. Thompson, Flight Engineer, Sgt. R. Maryan, Mid Upper Gunner and Sgt. P. Smith, Rear Gunner.

Three days before his departure back to NZ he met and became engaged to my English mother (Ros). She followed him to NZ six months later on board 'The Bride Ship', which also deposited young English ladies in Canada and Australia! That's how I and two siblings came to be Kiwis.

The war was a 'good' one for my Dad. He lived and relayed many, many memories and friendships, and we had various Lancasters - photos, paintings, models - throughout our home, south of Auckland. He and Mum attended many 75 Squadron Reunions in NZ and, from 1975 onwards, every two years, either in Canada or Cambridgeshire/Mepal.

I've lived in the UK since 1998. I initially came to the UK on my own, for my middle-aged adventure! Dad died in 2003, and I began attending 75 (NZ) Squadron reunions when I lived in Cambridge, in 2005. I now live in Warrington South and have a son, married to his English wife, with three children living nearby; my eldest son still lives in Auckland, with his Chinese wife and two children.

Looking forward to meeting you again in May. (*We sincerely hope you will join us again Jo. Ed*)



Dee represented 75(NZ) Squadron at a memorial service on the Goorseweg, in Enter, Holland in April.

The event, postponed from 2021, was to dedicate a memorial to the crew of Short Stirling bomber BK604 AA-S which crashed there on 3rd February 1943. Four of the eight crew members died here and are buried in nearby Wieden cemetery.

Many of the lost crew member's families attended the commemoration event.

78 years on from when the bomber crashed this memorial commemorates those who died and was installed with the inscription "Through this monument we want to make the passer by remember this event and to remember those who fought for our freedom"

The aircrew that perished were: -

P/O J McCulloch DFC RNZAF; Sgt F F Allen RAFVR; Sgt T A Murphy RNZAF & Sgt P R Trewayne also from the RAFVR.

The aircraft was part of a force of 263 aircraft detailed to bomb Hamburg. The weather conditions during the early part of the flight were terrible with strong winds and turbulence. This improved as they passed over Holland where a night fighter, piloted by Hauptmann Wolfgang Thimmig of the Stab III./NJG 1, flying a Bf 110 F-4 from Twente airfield.



BK604 was mercilessly attacked twice, setting the airframe alight and sending it into an uncontrollable spin towards the earth below. Some stability was regained and the pilot ordered everyone to bale out. Sadly, it would appear that this was too late and far too low, but, thankfully, four men did survive: -

Co-Pilot Sgt. R.W. Henderson 411894 RNZAF, Survived, PoW; Navigator F/Sgt. W.E. Gibbes 404535 RNZAF Survived, PoW; W/Op Sgt. K.J.S. Smith 411783 RNZAF Survived, PoW and A/G Sgt. K.E. Kimberley 1536231 RAF Survived, PoW.

The aircraft, out of control, exploded in the air above the Goorseweg on the outskirts of Enter, where this new memorial has been laid.



This second, very evocative, memorial, also unveiled in Holland was designed by a young British sculptor, Laura O'Neill. Commissioned to commemorate the crew of a 218 (Gold Coast) Squadron Stirling, lost on the night of 29/30th March 1943, it consists of a World War Two airman sitting on a 14-cylinder Bristol Hercules XVI engine recovered from the crash site.

The Short Stirling bomber was shot down by a German fighter pilot on its way back from a raid over Berlin. The wreckage was located in 2008 when a piece of machinery became entangled in the anchor of a stranded boat.

The recovery of the plane was the result of a decade-long campaign by the families of a different plane's crew.

For years the wreckage was believed to belong to another Short Stirling, BK710, of 149 (East India) Squadron, after a piece of its panel was misidentified by forensic experts.

The mistake was discovered in 2019 when a cigarette case was found bearing the initials of Flying Officer John Michael Campbell, at 30 the oldest man on board the aircraft. The plane's identity was confirmed when the recovery operation began last August. Human remains were examined by the Dutch military salvage and identification service. A funeral service for the seven crewmen, five from the UK and two Canadians, was held in September 2022. *(See next page. Ed.)*

Relatives of BK716's crew were among the 150 people attending the hour-long commemoration in the Bos der Onverzettelijken memorial garden. The families of the BK710 crew were also invited and watched the ceremony by video link. *(This is abridged from an article in www.dutchnews.nl/news/2021/10/relatives-attend-ceremony-for-crew-of-bomber-shot-down-in-1943 .With thanks. Ed)*

So, sadly, the crew of BK710 remain as initially recorded, missing, presumed dead. All except A/G Sgt. C J Percival, whose body washed ashore on Heligoland on 20th June 1943 and is buried in Hamburg cemetery.

Their raid, on 25/6th May 1943 to bomb Dusseldorf, was considered a failure, heavy cloud and false targets meant very little damage was done on the target. It was costly night for the RAF as a whole, with 27 aircraft lost, 161 airmen killed, seven more injured and 27 becoming POWs.

However, I found information on the internet that says an addition has been made to the original memorial near the community centre of Het Trefpunt on Marken. Seven basalt blocks have been added, with the names of the seven crew engraved in stainless steel caps on top. One day they will be found, they are never forgotten.

(I am grateful to the CWGC, Ministry of Defence and Veterans UK websites for help in completing the following report on the burial of the crew of BK716. Photograph courtesy of Sgt Samantha Crowe, Imagery Tech., Canadian Armed Forces. Ed)

So, on 28th September 2022, the remains of the crew of Short Stirling BK716 were laid to rest in Jonkerbos War Cemetery, with full military honours.



The 28 September service was led by Reverend (Squadron Leader) Josephine Critchley, Chaplain at RAF Honington, and was attended by family members.

Representatives of The Royal Air Force (RAF), Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), The British Embassy in the Netherlands and local dignitaries were present. Members of the Queen's Colour Squadron (QCS) bore the coffin and laid the remains to rest.

The culmination of many years of work in locating, mis-identifying, research by the families, the Dutch authorities and the final identification has led to these seven airmen having a known and identifiable resting place. *May they rest in peace together, forever. Ed.*



Continuing the theme of memorials; 149 (East India) Squadron historian, Alan Fraser and Dutch member, researcher and correspondent, Adrian van Zantvoort contacted me about this new memorial. Ed

Officially unveiled on 4th May 2022 these posts stand testament and witness the memory of the crew of yet another Short Stirling, W7580.

Shot down by a night fighter piloted by Unteroffizier Heinz Oloff of the 3./NJG 1, who was flying Bf 110 G9+AL from Venlo airfield. The aircraft was returning from a raid on Duisburg. It was the first 'kill' for Oloff, who survived the war as a highly experienced night fighter ace.

The crew, Pilot: F/O A J L Bowes – F/E Sgt N Acton - Nav Sgt D Morris - B/A Sgt G Blatherwick – W/Op Sgt E H Boumphrey - and A/Gs P/O P H Basson and Sgt Ernest Charles Isted are all buried in a collective grave in Uden War Cemetery.

Adrian says “A friend who has done the most research as he live in Geffen and an active member of the Historical Group there, has contact with all the crew relatives and also he got in touch with the German pilot’s son. The memorial unveiling was attended by two crew families of Norman Acton and Ernest Isted.”

Dutch website <https://www.bhic.nl/> is the source of further information about the crash. Ed.

‘Freed from its bomb load, W7580 crossed the (former) Dutch border near Nijmegen. The aircraft had already appeared on the radar in Venlo at that time. Heinz Oloff and his colleagues took off to intercept the enemy aircraft on their way back. Over the southwest of Oss, at 3.25 am, a short dogfight took place, in which W7580 caught fire and quickly lost altitude.

The plane headed for Geffen in the dark night. There, the inhabitants were startled from their sleep by the screeching noise and the bright light of the burning aircraft. Not knowing where the plane would eventually land, most residents (sic) held their hearts, hoping and praying that it would not land on their house....

Whether the pilot managed to avoid some houses is not entirely clear. The crew of the Air Protection Service on a watchtower in Oss notes that they get the impression that one or more people wanted to leave the aircraft with a parachute before it caught fire. Shortly before 3.30 am the aircraft crashes, 20 meters over the Rijksweg, exactly between the houses of Has van den Hanenberg, Jans Huismans and Jan van de Veerdonk. Miraculously, there were no fatalities among the civilian population.

In the days after the crash, the human remains of the English crew members were collected in four coffins and transferred to the parsonage garden in Uden. In the autumn of 1946 they were reburied in a joint grave in Uden.’

The picture on the right comes from the same website and shows the actual crew and aircraft.



No mention of commemorations would be complete without the wonderful work carried out by Alain Foune and his many supporters, friends and committees in memory of Lancaster L7576 of 622 Squadron. So, as you might expect, here is his write-up of the ceremony in the forest near Petitmont for July 2022. Ed.

LANCASTER L7576 GI-K N° 622 SQN RAF

July 23, 2024: from the airmen of yesterday to those of tomorrow...

On July 29, 1944, the Lancaster L7576 of No. 622 Squadron Royal Air Force crashed at the place named "Le Noir Trou" at Petitmont (54480-France).

The crew consisted of young men:

Flight/Officer PEABODY. Pilot. 23 years. Missing.

Flight/Officer DOE. Navigator. 22 years old. Missing.

Flight/Officer WISHART. Flight engineer. Prisoner of war

Flight/Officer FIDDICK. Bomber. 27 years old. Escaped, repatriated to England.

Sergeant PAYTON. Radio gunner. 30 years. Killed.

Flight/Sergeant PROUX. Gunner. 30 years. Killed.

Sergeant BUCKLEY. Gunner. 30 years. Killed.

This tragedy then fell shamefully into oblivion for more than 70 years.

Then some men came forward, and for four consecutive years now the memory of these brave airmen has been commemorated in front of the "Lancaster Memorial" inaugurated in Saint-Sauveur on July 29, 2019.

This July 23, 2022, once again, they did not fail.

Placed under the presidency of Philippe Arnould, Mayor of Saint-Sauveur and President of the « Communauté de Communes de Vezouze en Piémont », this ceremony took place in the presence of local elected officials in front of members of the families of the crew who had made long journeys, and who deserve to be mentioned: John and Thomas Peck (Quebec), Rick Doe (California), Richard Coplen (Ireland), and Sean Summerfield (British Columbia).

But this ceremony also displayed beautiful "Aviation" colours since it was honoured by the faithful presence of Général d'Armée Aérienne (2S) Philippe Adam, the Group Captain Anthony McCord, Military Attaché of the British Embassy in Paris who came with his family, a delegation from the Documentation and Historical Research Centre (CDRH) of Nancy-Ochey Air Base 133, chaired by Lieutenant-Colonel Jean-Claude Barral, and four « Médailles de l'Aéronautique ».

Finally, the success of this ceremony was ensured by another eminent "Armée de l'Air (et de l'Espace!)", Colonel Pierre-Alain Antoine (CDRH), officiating faithfully as a very reliable master of ceremonies.

The ceremony followed the 'standard' protocol established for this event. In particular the very solemn placing of the "Remembrance Day Poppy Wreath" and its message by the Group Captain Anthony McCord and his niece; youngest participant in the audience. Then the wreaths of the families by Rick Doe, nephew of Flight/Officer James Harrington Doe, navigator of L7576.



The many Standards paraded at the ceremony at "Le Noir Trou".



Beautiful "Aviation" colours: -

Pierre-Alain Antoine, Jean-Claude Barral, Philippe Adam, Anthony Mc Cord, Raoul Hinsinger, Louis Steff.



Families gathered: - Alain Founé (his family), Anthony Mc Cord (his family and his dog!), John & Thomas Peck, Rick Doe, Richard Coplen, and Sean Summerfield. (Cont. P. 28)

More pictures from the reunion weekend.





From top left Page 25 – Inside the fabrication section. Top R – the reminders of their heritage are everywhere. Centre – Instrument calibration. Bottom – How to de-ice a KC135 tanker.

This page, Top Left – ‘Virtual’ maintenance training facility. Top R – The sign in the ‘Splash 6’ bar and crew recreation area. Centre – Two more reminders of where we were. Bottom – We await the excellent historical talk by base historian, Rob Paley

Middleton Hall, former Officers Mess. The venue for all our meals and the AGM.



Continued from Page 23. - The version of "The Last Post" used, was recorded on April 17, 2021 in the Saint Georges Chapel in Windsor during the burial of Prince Philippe of Edinburgh. This year's ceremony was also an opportunity to associate two extra events with it.

During this year, two friends of L7576 died, whom we wished to associate with the crew of L7576 to pay them the tribute they deserved.

Madeleine Schultz (100 years old) who, loyally and quietly, did her "Duty as a Frenchwoman", continually, since 1944, until the end of her strength, caring for the graves of the three gunners found in the wreckage of L7576 who are buried in the communal cemetery of Petitmont, her village. Madeleine now rests a few metres from them.

Gilbert George (85 years old), quiet and courteous veteran, very attached to commemorative ceremonies, who was not only one of the faithful from the first hour of the "Lancaster Memorial" history, but also the last known eyewitness of the Lancaster's flight passage during the night of July 28 to 29, 1944. Gilbert now rests in Parux cemetery, within 2 miles of them.

In memory of the crew of L7576 and those of Madeleine and Gilbert, the assembly gathered to the tune of "Amazing Grace", played on bagpipes.

Finally, the Documentation and Historical Research Centre of Nancy Ochey wanted to involve young people from the Community of Communes whose interest in aeronautics was to be demonstrated. As a tribute to this passion, CDRH model makers presented in front of the "Lancaster Memorial", a batch of 90 military aircraft models of all types that they. We bet that this gesture will strengthen the links between the aviators of yesterday and those of today, and will encourage aeronautical vocations. Because it is also young people that we have celebrated here. One of them was only 18 years old.

The ceremony was followed by cocktails and a meal with all the families and the CDRH. This beautiful and moving 2022 ceremony ended with a salute to the twenty flag bearers present to the sounds of Royal Air Force Music. Alain FOUNÉ

And, in other news: -

At the Bomber Command memorial ceremony in 2022, one of those who lost their lives in the Battle of Heligoland Bight, was mentioned. AC2 Harry Gillott was a rear gunner in a 149 Squadron Wellington bomber that day, which failed to return.

I met his relatives at the Runnymede ceremony organised by Jack Waterfall, when I was told the story about him. What is produced here is courtesy of Angela Gooch, nee Gillott and the BBC WW2 Peoples War website. Ed.

Harry Gillott Aircraftman 2nd Class RAF 149 Squadron

Born in 1916 in Sheffield Yorkshire UK, Harry Gillott was in the RAF. His rank was Aircraftman 2nd class 623761 149 squadron rear gunner in a Wellington bomber based at Mildenhall.

In April 1940 his mother and father, Harry and Lavinia, received the sad news that their son Harry's Wellington came down over the coast of Norway and that Harry was lost, presumed dead.

Some weeks later, Harry's younger brother Leslie, who was aged thirteen at the time, was watching a matinee at Heeley Picture Palace in Sheffield. The film was a war film showing original news footage.

Suddenly, Leslie saw - flashed on the silver screen - a shot of his brother coming down the aircraft steps then posing with his comrades in front of the craft. Leslie ran back home to tell his Ma " Ma, our Harry i'n't dead - I've just see him ont' pictures".



On the left is a 'still' from that newsreel that Leslie saw. Harry is the one in white overalls.

She immediately rushed to explain the plight to the manager of the cinema. The manager produced a still photograph from the cine film and gave it to the distraught mother. That still photo is included in the posting, Harry is the second right.

A similar shot from the film appeared in a newspaper and the caption read 'Here are

some of the British pilots who took part in the great Aerial battle of Heligoland. Smiles and thumbs up show that they know they had by far the best of it.'

The official report of the Heligoland battle stated that "The laurels go to the Wellington bombers, which resisted the most desperate, and, it may be said also, the most courageous and dashing efforts of the enemy's crack fighters to break them up."

Quest for the Archive Newsreel

I am Harry's niece, Leslie Gillott's daughter, and I have been trying to trace the film for some years without success....

Before Leslie's death in 2001, he had always maintained that the footage of his brother, Harry, was part of a war film. (Remember he was just thirteen years old when he saw it!)

Despite viewing several war films over the years, including 'The Lion Has Wings' and 'One of Our Aircraft is Missing', no trace of Harry's footage could be found. Then, on 19th April 2005 whilst browsing the internet, a strong contender for the missing film was found. 'Target for Tonight' was made in 1941 and directed by Harry Carr. The film was made with the crew of 149 squadron (no actors) performing their daily routines for the benefit of the camera. Harry was in 149 Sqdn. This film looked like a highly likely candidate. A copy was ordered from a company in Chicago which specialized in war films. On 23rd April 2005, the film was delivered. - It wasn't the one. Harry wasn't in it! (By no means was this the company's fault).

23 April 2005 — I launched an appeal for the missing footage on the internet. The response was tremendous!

The Imperial War Museum advised that the still seemed to have been shot at an earlier date than the popular films, suggesting that it could be news footage. A kind helper called Ian from the internet provided the following information.

"An extract from a book by W R Chorley's called 'Royal Air Force Bomber Command Losses of the Second World War, Vol 1', states: -

"149 Sqn Wellington 1C P9246. Take off 11.53 Mildenhall to search for enemy shipping off Norway. Last seen flying towards Norwegian coast, its position being 5445N 0515E. All lost. Sgt Wakeling and AC2 Tootle are buried in Falnes Churchyard, Karmoy Island, Norway. The remainder (Sgt H J Wheller, Sgt W C Parker, LAC R Coalter, AC2 H Gillott) are commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial. A second 149 Sqn Wellington was last seen at 1610 about 5 miles from the other, being pursued by a Me.110." Ian suggested that the aircraft in the background is a Wellington. The obvious reasoning for this is the geodetic fabric and window visible.

Another helper suggested searching Pathé News, an online database holding 3500 hours of searchable news footage.

27th April 2005 - From the clues various people had given, I typed keywords into the searchable database of Pathé News. Most of the results were immediately discounted because the dates didn't tally. Then I pursued a result that was undated....the description made my heartbeat quicken....'Air crews disembark from their planes.... Group of pilots and crew giving the thumbs up sign'my thoughts flashed to the newspaper clipping - Wellington -crew disembarks - gathers on tarmac - thumbs up sign....

I played the preview....perhaps I recognize the flight sergeant dressed in white flight gear, with a moustache....the camera panned to the right.... YES! HE'S THERE! IT'S HARRY! AND THE FILM ACTUALLY FREEZES ON HIM AT THE END! I WAS ELATED! - AFTER 65 YEARS THE FOOTAGE HAS BEEN FOUND!

Then sadness - those brave, smiling young men didn't realize that three months hence they would be killed! This archive newsreel has brought it home to me exactly what sacrifices were made during the wars, both by the soldiers themselves and the suffering of their families.

Angela Gooch nee Gillott

Further info and photos at www.gillottfamilyhistory.com

Another search, as yet unresolved, came to me through the website from Tim Wood, regarding his Grandfather's (Stan Franks) medals and logbook. Ed.

"I'm hoping you can help me. My Grandfather, Stan Franks died in October 2013. He was an F/S pilot in XV Squadron on Lancaster's. I'm trying to locate his flight logbook and medals. I had presumed my mother had received these after his passing, but since her passing I found out she didn't have them. I have found pictures of the logbook online but unable to determine its whereabouts. I remember

reading it as a young boy and hearing the stories that my grandfather wanted to share with me. Any information would be gratefully received. Many thanks, Tim”.

Well, a quick search of the web did indeed bring up pictures of the logbook, for which the person(s) were asking in excess of £10 for a copy! Guessing that at some stage these articles may well have been sold I tried to contact the alleged owner(s) of the pictures; to no avail. I then thought this might be a job for (retired) XV Squadron historian, Martyn Ford-Jones. With his Squadron knowledge he might just happen to know where these items were or have made copies of them for his extensive research. Tim, in the meantime continued searching, via the web and by phone, the archives of many of the well-known ‘depositories’ for such items. I put a post on our website and Dee did one for the Facebook page. Martyn did have copies of some parts of the logbook, but not all. Nor did he know where the medals or actual logbook were.

The latest I’ve heard is: -

“It was very nice hearing from Martyn. He told me he spent some time with my Grandad at various events. Unfortunately he has no idea what happened to his flight book or medals. I've emailed him to thank him for his time and shared some stories with him.

I've also recently had a response to an email I sent to RAF Hendon regarding my Mother donating them to the museum. They have no record of this taking place. My Mother was not in a good state of mind at this time and was very forgetful and not forthcoming with any information.

The last time I saw the medals was on top of his coffin at the funeral. My next port of call is trying to contact Gray's RAFA, who organised the ceremony, to see if they know what happened to them after the event. Still hopeful. Tim

So, if anyone has any knowledge of these items and can help return them to the rightful owner, please do get in touch. My details at the end of the newsletter. Ed.

Martyn to the rescue once again. *When the following (edited) request came in from Mandy Trafford, and with a little background searching myself, I knew Martyn would be just the man, if I could continue to coax him out of his retirement just one more time. Thankfully, he responded.*

I hope that you don't mind me contacting you but I was wondering if there was any way possible that you could please point me in the direction of anyone that would be able to give me any information or photographs of my late father's cousin Sergeant SWJ Taylor 3000350 of XV Squadron. He was stationed at RAF Mildenhall and also wrote home (he was brought up with my father as he was raised by my Nan and Granddad) from Methwold and Feltwell.

His date of birth was 24/02/1924 and he was hit by flak and killed in his Lancaster LS-W HK626 near the Barnhof at Osterfeld on 04/12/1944. He's listed as being an air gunner and my Dad said that he was a rear gunner.

I believe that his Lancaster was GH equipped (?) and that Stan had been on numerous operations. I have information on his grave at Reichswald Cemetery and hope to visit him some time in the future.

I have contacted International Bomber Command Centre and they suggested that I request his Service Records from the RAF which I am going to do, and I have also been to The Bird In Hand at Mildenhall as I hoped that they would have some old pictures in the bar. I am also going to contact the East Kirkby Museum in the hope that they have any information or pictures of Stan but I would be most grateful if you have any suggestions as to the best ways possible of finding anything, anywhere that relates to him. Many thanks, Kind regards, Amanda Trafford.

This was the same crew as former Australian, Ralph Skilbeck's brother had served on and died with. Many might remember Ralph's visits to Mildenhall, which he combined with visits to his family in the West Country. The enquiry coincided with my trip to East Kirkby to meet the Golaten family and Sophie and Malcolm, so I did a little digging in their files there. Apart from pictures of Robert Skilbeck, there were none of the whole crew. The great thing was, we'd gotten Martyn out of 'retirement' once more and he managed to furnish Amanda with loads of material, which she'd not seen before, in exchange for more details on her Father's cousin.

Sadly, there were no pictures of the whole crew together, nor Stan alone; so here's a plea for help, if you have any, Amanda (and Martyn) would love to know.

Well done Martyn, we knew you couldn't remain retired for long, just don't overdo things. Ed.

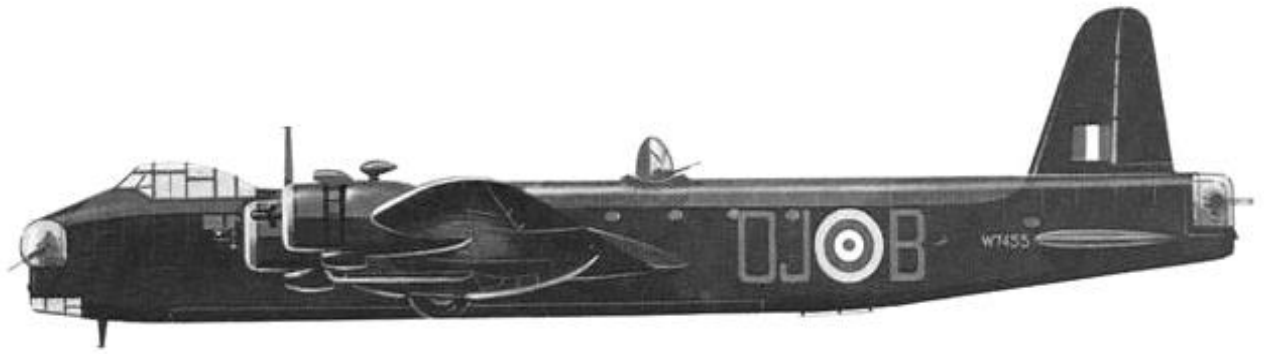
Another historian I lean on heavily for research is Alan Fraser, the Short Stirling and 149 (East India) Squadron. Not in the best of health, sadly, he'll always rally to the call when I need a hand. As it was in this case. With the year being one of numerous jubilees, and milestone, I'd asked for a story to illustrate the state of the aerial war 80 years ago, so 1942. What follows is a wonderfully researched and written history of a Stirling crew and 149 (East India) Squadron at that time. To gain the full impact, I've only edited where absolutely necessary, for which I hope Alan will forgive me and you, dear reader gain the full experience.

"Out and Back" The story of a Bomber Crew of 149 (East India) Sqn. R.A.F.

The Squadron. During World War Two 149 (East India) Squadron, was based at RAF Mildenhall, RAF Lakenheath and latterly, RAF Methwold. The squadron was re-formed in 1937 at Mildenhall as a night-bomber unit and equipped with Heyford aircraft.

Wellingtons were received early in 1939. The squadron played a prominent part in the early offensive against Germany and Italy and after having re-equipped with Stirlings, took part in the first 1,000-bomber raids. It went on to serve steadfastly until the end of the war, with a Victoria Cross awarded to one of its pilots.

The Aircraft. Short Brothers Stirling Mk 1, serial W7572 coded OJ-R 149 Sqn, RAF. Built by Austin Motors. This aircraft arrived at 149 Sqn from No 10 Maintenance Unit (10MU) on the 14th June 1942.



(Note: Aircraft shown is OJ-B, a Mk 1 of a similar vintage.)

The Crew. 1193117 Sgt DA Baker – Captain (Pilot Evaded capture)
NZ 41530 Sgt FJ Berthelsen – Observer Evaded capture
574193 Sgt J B Downing - F/Engineer Injured - POW
993644 H Williams – Wop Evaded capture
1011435 G Robinson – A/G Evaded capture
1379417 Sgt T J Jenkins - A/G Evaded capture
1376387 F/Sgt V S Wood - A/G Injured – POW

(Sources, 149 Sqdn Operational Record Book; W R Chorley, Bomber Command Losses of the Second World War, Volume 3.)

The Operation. Frankfurt - 24/25th Aug 1942.

226 aircraft took part in this raid. 104 Wellingtons, 61 Lancasters, 53 Stirlings and 8 Halifaxes. 16 aircraft were lost - 6 Lancasters, 5 Wellingtons, 4 Stirlings and 1 Halifax. This was 7.1% of the force sent. 5 Pathfinder aircraft, including that of the commanding officer of 7 Squadron were among the aircraft lost.

This was the second Pathfinder-led raid and the Pathfinder crews again experienced great difficulty in locating the target in cloudy conditions, most of the bombing fell in open country north and west of Frankfurt. Local reports say that some bombs fell in the city, with 17 large and 53 small fires and with moderate property damage. 5 people were killed, including 2 flak gunners, and 95 people were injured. The Frankfurt report describes an incident where a four-engine bomber crashed on the edge of a metal works and its bomb load exploded. The outlying villages of Schwalbach and Eschborn were heavily bombed.

(Source: The Bomber Command War Diaries: Martin Middlebrook & Chris Everitt.)

OJ-R took off from Lakenheath at 21.20. The Squadron Operational Record Book (ORB) simply states: "Aircraft failed to return".

The Reason. The aircraft was shot down by Oberfeldwebel (Ofw) Reinhard Kollack of 7/NJG4 and crashed at 01.46 near Thieulain (Hainaut) 12 Km E of Tournai, Belgium. (Also given in the NJG intercept records as: bei Leuze, 27 Km NW of Mons at 3,600m)

Ofw. Kollack made three attacks on the aircraft during which two crew members were slightly injured.

The German Raid Records. The German records on this raid state:-

“226 aircraft were despatched to bomb Frankfurt between 23.40 and 00.38 hrs. 16 of their number failed to return. Aided by the prevailing fine weather with good visibility, an almost full moon and no cloud, Nachtjager (Night Fighter Aircraft) from NJG 1 and NJG 4 operating in Dunkel Nachtjagd (see Note) over Belgium and Northern France shot down 14 Heavies, mainly on the Bomber’s return track. These included Raume 7A and 7B, situated at Aisemont and Villers-deux-Eglises near Charleroi respectively, in which III./NJG4 achieved eight victories on this night. (The ‘Raumes’ referred to are Night Fighter Control Boxes)”

(Note: from Nachtjagd War Diaries Vol 1. Dr Theo E W Boiten. Dunkel Nachtjagd (DUNAJA or Dark Night Fighting) employed Freya A/N-Verfahren (Ground Control Intercept radar), which ensured that both the fighter and the bomber were tracked by 1 Freya and displayed on 1 Alpha scope. Initially DUNAJA sites were equipped with 1 Freya AN and one Würzburg (Radar) for height finding.)

The Crew History.

Sgt Pilot Baker (and presumably his crew) were posted in to 149 Sqn on 7th May 1942. He did his first “Familiarisation” Operation on 30th May ’42, with Flt Lt Simmons and his crew, as a trip to Koln. They reported: “Bombs dropped in middle of town, west of river. A number of 4lb incendiaries hung up and were brought back. Many fires observed, concentrated in suburbs”.

(Note: John Johnston, the author of the 149 Sqn history, “Strong By Night”, recalls, “Incendiaries were carried in crates that reminded me of banana boxes. The crate doors open to drop the loosely packed incendiaries, with the crate remaining in the bomb bay. When they don’t (drop), the crate of incendiary bombs is brought back. Sometimes the doors open afterwards dropping the incendiaries on the closed bomb doors”.

“Once when I was out on the flight line (on No 466 RAAF Squadron, 4 Group, RAF Driffield) I had to help a sergeant armourer move a load of incendiaries that were lying on the bomb doors. He had cracked the doors open and peered inside with a flashlight. Then he called me over, yelled ‘OK!’ and the bomb doors were opened by someone inside the aircraft. The incendiaries fell onto the parking apron under the bomber. We then worked like fury carrying all of the incendiaries clear of the aircraft. None went off”.)

Sgt Baker also took a 149 Sqn Conversion Flight aircraft (“C” Flt), Stirling 1, OJ-Z, serial N3682, to Essen on an Operation. One of his crew on that trip was a former Mildenhall Register committee member, Wireless Operator Sgt Jim Coman, DFC

The full “Baker” crew operational history is as follows:

1st Op - Stirling I, serial R9329 coded OJ-V; 16th June ’42 Target – Le Mans, Nickeling (Propaganda Leaflets)

Take Off (T/O) at 23.57 from RAF Lakenheath, landing at 05.01 with 80 “nickels” dropped. 9 Aircraft on mission. No losses.

2nd Op - Stirling I, serial R9329 coded OJ-V; 17th June '42 Target - St Nazaire Docks.

T/O at 22.58 from Lakenheath, landing at 05.17. Dock area not identified due to 9/10ths cloud. Half bomb load jettisoned at Berness Heath and rest brought back.

27 Stirlings and Wellingtons went to St Nazaire, but only 6 bombed in poor weather. No Losses.

3rd Op - Stirling I, serial W7510 coded OJ-S; 19th June '42 Target Emden

T/O at 23.45 from Lakenheath, landing at 03.37. Bombs released on TR. release point. No bursts or results seen. Glow in target area.

194 aircraft – 112 Wellingtons, 37 Halifaxes, 25 Stirlings, 11 Hampdens, 9 Lancasters. 9 aircraft lost – 6 Wellingtons, 2 Stirlings, 1 Halifax. 131 crews claimed to have bombed Emden. Bombing photographs showed that part of the flare force started a raid on Osnabruck, 80 miles from Emden, in which 29 aircraft eventually joined. Emden recorded only 5 high-explosive bombs and 200-300 incendiaries with no damage or casualties.

(Note: In early '42 "Gee" was added to the navigation aids of Bomber Command, with the plan to gradually fit it throughout. As a test run, two aircraft had used "Gee" on a raid to Hanover. One was shot down, with the possibility that the Germans already had a "Gee" set, although "Gee" was fitted with a detonator which should have destroyed part of the indicator and the crystal oscillator.

They knew that as soon as the Germans could get their hands on a working set it would be compromised, so they held off installing it until they had enough sets. However the aircraft were coming off the assembly lines with the appropriate indicator and receiver trays already installed. They needed to do a little misdirection.

To facilitate this misdirection, they gave air crews the information that a new "beam approach" system was coming along, called 'Jay' (as that sounded enough like "Gee", and the aircraft had these trays all marked TR1335, (Hence TR) although "Gee" doesn't have a transmitter. They knew that any air crew shot down and interrogated would give the "Beam Approach" story. They even transmitted a 'beam' now and then, that was close to the "Gee" frequency and that looked like a Lorenz Beam. Sure enough, it wasn't long before Intelligence learned that the Germans 'knew' about the new non-existent Jay equipment!

When "Gee" did go into service, which was the Mk I, the air crew still called it by what was on the tray, TR1335, or simply 'TR'. This was invaluable for target marking as it could get the aircraft approximately to the target in the dark for targets within 400 miles, also for mine laying as the position of each of each mine laid needed to be known for post-war mine sweeping.)

4th Op - Stirling I, serial N6082 coded OJ-Q; 22nd June '42. Target Emden

T/O at 23.45 from Lakenheath, landing at 04.30. Bombs released on TR. release point. Bursts seen in town area. All bombs dropped.

227 aircraft – 144 Wellingtons, 26 Halifaxes, 38 Stirlings, 8 Hampdens, 11 Lancasters. 6 aircraft lost – 4 Wellingtons, 1 Stirling, and 1 Lancaster. 196 crews claimed good bombing results, but decoy fires are believed to have drawn off many bombs. Emden

reports 50 houses destroyed, 100 damaged, damage in the Harbour, 6 people killed and 40 injured.

5th Op - Stirling I, serial R9329 coded OJ-V; 2nd July '42. Target Bremen

T/O at 23.26 from Lakenheath, landing at 03.59. Bombs thought to have fallen in Newtown. Bursts seen to start three small fires. TR not working.

325 aircraft - 175 Wellingtons, 35 Halifaxes, 34 Stirlings, 28 Hampdens, 53 Lancasters. 13 aircraft lost – 8 Wellingtons, 2 Stirlings, 2 Hampdens, 1 Halifax. 265 crews claimed to have bombed in good visibility, but it is probable that much of the attack fell outside the southern borders of the town. A brief Bremen report says that more than 1,000 houses and 4 small industrial firms were damaged. 3 Cranes and 7 ships in the port were also hit. 1 of the ships, the 1,736-ton steamer “Marieborg” sank and it is recorded as having become a danger to navigation. Only 5 people were killed and 4 injured.

6th Op - Stirling I, serial N3755 coded OJ-S; 7th July '42. Target Freisians - Mining

T/O at 00.27 from Lakenheath, landing at 04.37. T/R. not serviceable but mines laid within 5/6 miles of allotted position.

23 Stirlings on mission. No losses.

7th Op - Stirling I, serial N3755 coded OJ-S; 8th July '42 Target Wilhelmshaven

T/O at 00.13 from Lakenheath, landing at 04.02. Docks clearly seen in light of flares. Bombs dropped and bursts seen on Bauhaven. Fires seen burning well in dock area.

285 aircraft - 137 Wellingtons, 38 Halifaxes, 34 Stirlings, 24 Hampdens, 52 Lancasters to bomb the dock areas. 5 aircraft lost – 3 Wellingtons, 1 Halifax, and 1 Lancaster. Photographs showed that most of the bombing fell in open country west of the target. Wilhelmshaven reports damage to housing and a variety of other premises. The harbour master's residence and offices, a dockyard restaurant, a department store and a bus garage with 30 buses inside which were all destroyed. 25 people were killed and 170 injured.

8th Op - Stirling I, serial W7572 coded OJ-R; 21st July '42. Target Duisburg

T/O at 00.03 from Lakenheath, landing at 03.35. Target clearly visible and confirmed with T/R fixes. 1800 x 4lb Incendiaries dropped in old town. Many fires seen in target area. 4 bundles of “Nickel” dropped in area.

291 aircraft – 170 Wellingtons, 39 Halifaxes, 36 Stirlings, 29 Lancasters, 17 Hampdens. 12 aircraft lost – 10 Wellingtons, 1 Halifax, and 1 Hampden. 235 crews reported that they had bombed and started many fires, but photographs show that the flares of the leading aircraft, dropped by Gee were not accurate and part of the bombing fell in open country over the Rhine to the west. This large raid was possibly sent on a moonless night to avoid the increasing casualties being inflicted on night-bomber forces by German night fighters. It is interesting to note that the bombing results were better than on many moonlit raids but the bomber casualties at 4.1%, were heavier than normal. Returning crews reported that Duisburg's Flak and searchlight defences were not as fierce as in recent raids to that target because of the haze, most of the bomber losses were suffered in the coastal fighter belt.

Duisburg reports much damage in housing areas, 94 buildings being destroyed and 256 being seriously damaged, with 49 people being killed.

9th Op - Stirling I, serial W7572 coded OJ-R; 23rd July '42. Target Duisburg

T/O at 00.57 from Lakenheath, landing shortly after. Aircraft returned as rear turret and oil pump on starboard inner engine U/S.

(Note: On the Stirling, the rear turret was powered by hydraulic fluid from the starboard inner engine)

10th Op - Stirling I, serial W7572 coded OJ-R; 25th July '42. Target Duisburg

T/O at 00.34 from Lakenheath, landing at 03.45. 8/10ths cloud. Bombed by TR Fix. Bombs fell near burning fires, huge explosion seen, believed oil from observed oil tank. 6 bundles of "Nickel" dropped in area.

313 aircraft - 177 Wellingtons, 41 Halifaxes, 48 Stirlings, 45 Lancasters. 7 aircraft lost – 3 Wellingtons, 2 Lancasters, and 2 Stirlings. Much cloud was present over the target and the flares dropped by the leading aircraft were scattered. Those bombs which did fall in Duisburg again caused some housing damage and 65 people were killed.

11th Op - Stirling I, serial W7572 coded OJ-R; 26th July '42. Target Hamburg

T/O at 23.04 from Lakenheath, landing at 04.14. Target good visibility and pinpoints. Bombs dropped in built up area North of the river, E of aiming point. Good fires seen in target area. 6 bundles of "Nickel" dropped in area.

403 aircraft - 181 Wellingtons, 73 Halifaxes, 39 Stirlings, 77 Lancasters, 33 Hampdens. – dispatched in what was probably a full "maximum effort" for the regular bomber command squadrons. 29 aircraft lost – 15 Wellingtons, 8 Halifaxes, 2 Lancasters, 2 Stirlings, 2 Hampdens – 7.2% of the force.. Crews encountered a mix of cloud and icing at some places on the route but clear weather at the target. Good bombing results were claimed. Hamburg reports show that severe and widespread damage was caused, mostly in housing and semi-commercial districts rather than in the docks and industrial areas. At least 800 fires were dealt with, 523 being classed as large. For the first time, the strong Hamburg fire department was forced to call for extensive help from outside the city. 823 houses were destroyed and more than 5,000 damaged. Estimates of compensation for damage claimed ran to 250 million Reichmarks (around £25 million). More than 14,000 people were bombed out. 337 people were killed and 1,027 injured.

12th Op - Stirling I, serial N3755 coded OJ-S; 28th July '42. Target Hamburg

T/O at 23.33 from Lakenheath, landing at 05.01. Visibility very poor. Target identified by visual pinpoint of river and fires. Bombs dropped slightly E.N.E. of Alster Basin. 4 bursts seen – no results. 4 bundles of "Nickel" dropped in area. Photo' attempted but not good due to evasive action at that time.

256 aircraft – 165 from 3 Group, and 91 O.T.U. aircraft – A much larger force had been detailed for this raid but bad weather over the bases of 1, 4 and 5 groups prevented their participation. The force which took off was 1612 Wellingtons, 71 Stirlings and 24 Whitleys. The weather, both on the outbound flight and over the English bases, worsened and the O.T.U aircraft were recalled, although 3 of them went on to bomb

Hamburg. The bombers which did proceed became very scattered, many aircraft turned back and only 68 bombed in the target area. Hamburg suffered 13 people killed and 48 injured with 56 fires, 15 of them large. The worst incident was a direct hit on a ward of the Eppendorf Hospital, where 12 patients and nurses were killed and 39 injured. Bomber losses were heavy. 16 Wellingtons and 9 Stirlings were lost from 3 Group (15.2%) 4 OUT Wellingtons were lost and a Whitley crashed in the sea.

13th Op - Stirling I, serial W7572 coded OJ-R; 31st July '42. Target Dusseldorf

T/O at 01.02 from Lakenheath, landing at 04.23. Cloud Nil, but ground haze and smoke. Bombs dropped in built up area east bank of the Rhine. Good fires seen in target area. 4 bundles of "Nickel" dropped in area.

630 aircraft - 308 Wellingtons, 70 Halifaxes, 61 Stirlings, 113 Lancasters, 54 Hampdens, 24 Whitleys. – dispatched. This was another raid in which bomber command's training units provided aircraft, though it was not an attempt to reach the 1,000 aircraft figure. It was the first occasion when more than 100 took part in a raid. 484 aircraft claimed successful bombing although their photographs showed that part of the force bombed open country. Most parts of Dusseldorf and Neuss, the suburb town over the Rhine were hit. 453 buildings were destroyed and more than 15,000 damaged. 954 fires were started, of which 67 were classed as large. 279 people were killed and 1,018 injured and 12,053 bombed out. 29 aircraft were lost. 16 Wellingtons, 5 Hampdens, 4 Halifaxes, 2 Lancasters and 2 Whitleys for 4.6%.

14th Op - Stirling I, serial W7572 coded OJ-R; 5th Aug '42. Target Essen "B"

T/O at 22.50 from Lakenheath, landing at 01.36. Aircraft returned – no cloud cover.

17 Aircraft to Essen. Only 1 aircraft bombed.

15th Op - Stirling I, serial W7572 coded OJ-R; 9th Aug '42. Target Osnabruck

T/O at 00.31 from Lakenheath, landing at 04.29. Slight haze. 5 x 1900lb bombs seen to burst in fires in built up area. 6 bundles of "Nickel" dropped in area. Fires visible for almost 100 miles after leaving target area.

192 aircraft - 91 Wellingtons, 19 Halifaxes, 40 Stirlings, and 42 Lancasters dispatched. 3 Halifaxes and 3 Wellingtons lost. Visibility was good but the initial flares were dropped over a wide area. Osnabruck's report shows 206 houses and 1 military building were destroyed and nearly 4,000 other buildings were damaged. Among industrial buildings hit were a vehicle works, a gas meter factory, a textile factory and an iron foundry. The Herz-Jesu church was hit. Much damage was also caused in the town's dock area where 10 canal barges were damaged. 62 people were killed – 40 civilians, 17 foreign workers, 5 service or air-raid men and 107 injured. This was the first night where the Germans managed to jam the Gee signals used for targeting.

16th Op - Stirling I, serial R9329 coded OJ-V; 12th Aug '42. Target Mainz

T/O at 22.46 from Lakenheath, landing at 04.40. 10/10ths cloud, base 9000 ft. Target identified by river and ETA. 1800 x 4lb incendiaries seen to ignite. Glow seen for 50 miles.

154 aircraft - 68 Wellingtons, 25 Halifaxes, 28 Stirlings, and 33 Lancasters dispatched. 6 aircraft lost. 2 Halifaxes, 3 Wellingtons and one Lancaster. This was the first large raid

on this city. Much damage was caused in the centre of Mainz, with some ancient cultural buildings being hit; the castle and its museum were burnt out. The number of people believed killed was 152.

17th Op - Stirling I, serial W7589 coded OJ-P; 17th Aug '42. Target Osnabruck

T/O at 22.46 from Lakenheath, landing at 04.40 5/10ths cloud, base 9000 ft. Target identified. 1950 x 4lb incendiaries seen to ignite north of fire in built up area. 6 bundles of "Nickel" dropped in area.

Attacked on return by enemy fighter, returned from Dutch coast on two engines, crash landed near RAF Feltwell. English searchlight assistance was of great moral and material significance.

139 aircraft - 5 aircraft lost. 3 Wellingtons, 1 Stirling and 1 Lancaster. 3.6% losses. 111 crews reported accurate bombing. Osnabruck reported a sharp attack on the north and north-western parts of the town with 77 houses and 4 military buildings destroyed and 125 other buildings seriously damaged, including the town's main hospital, a paper mill and a copper wire factory. 7 People were killed and 15 injured.

(Note: Reference the "searchlight assistance" mentioned in the ORB. The crew could have used 'Darky'. 'Darky' was a code word, put out verbally by the wireless operator when an aircraft was lost or in distress. He called out "Darky!...Darky!..." much as he'd be calling "SOS". This was picked up by ground stations, who then coordinated on his signal then triangulated to give him his position. They could do this all the way back to his base or landed at another one. This was before Gee, when he could get a very good location, or if the Gee set was unserviceable.

An alternative to 'Darky' was achieved through the rarely mentioned Royal Observer Corps. They would pick up the aircraft location and pass it on to the nearest searchlight battery. The battery would then lock on to the 'plane with one searchlight. Then, after a few seconds, they would sweep the searchlight in the direction that the plane needed to go. They would do this over and over again, even handing over to another 'light if necessary, to get the plane to its own base or to one where they could land. It saved many a crew. Information from J. Johnston.)

18thOp - Stirling I, serial BF334 coded OJ-T; 20th Aug. Target Gardening, Deodars.

T/O at 20.39 from Lakenheath, landing at 04.25. 5/10ths cloud, good moon. Vegetables planted in allotted positions.

(A very laconic comment for the dropping of Mines - Operations known as "Gardening"!)

57 aircraft laid mines at many places from Brest to Danzig. 3 Stirlings and 3 Wellingtons were lost.

19th Op - Stirling I, serial W7572 coded OJ-R; 24th Aug '42. Target Frankfurt

T/O at 21.22 from Lakenheath. Failed to return.

(Note: All Operations notes taken from the ' Bomber Command War Diaries' by Middlebrook and Everitt)

Three of the shot down crew found their way into the hands of Belgian "Helpers" and then the Pat O'Leary (Escape) Line, with Baker and Williams following different paths until re-uniting with them later. Wood and Downing were captured and became POWs.

At the debriefing for MI9 the Evaders gave the following statements: -

Statement by Sgt Baker. D.A.

I came down about a mile from the aircraft, near Thieulain, and walked in cover of the woods until about dawn. I got a meal at a farmhouse, but the people were afraid to keep me, so I went back to the woods and slept there all day. At night I walked S.E., again in the woods. I rested at dawn near an isolated farmhouse, where I was later given a meal. The farm people hid me in the woods and brought me meals regularly for the next five days and allowed me to sleep in a barn at night. I was then taken to Vezon where I was sheltered for four days. On 5th Sept I cycled to Tournai, where I was handed over to an organisation.

Statement by Sgt Robinson. G.

I came down 3 miles S.E. of Leuze, hid my parachute at the corner of a wood and walked towards the French frontier. About daylight I hid in a potato field but a dog began to bark and a farmer discovered me. I told him who I was and he brought me food throughout the day. He got in touch with a friend, who put me into an empty house a short distance from Leuze. I remained there from the 25-29 Aug. and local farmers brought me food and water. On 29th Aug. I was moved to another house in Leuze, where I remained 'til 4th Sept. I was supplied with new clothes and shoes. On 4th Sept. I cycled from Leuze to Tournai and saw Sgts Jenkins and Berthelsen. I spent that night at Herta on the Belgian side of the frontier, and next day (5th) was taken to Lille.

Statement by Sgt Berthelsen. D.A. NZ 41530

I came down, probably near Thieulain and walked until about 07.00 hrs. I then lay up all day in a bush and started to walk at night. After two hours I was threatened by two men with clubs who found me picking currants in a garden. I had a revolver with me and stopped them from attacking me. When I explained who I was, they suggested a bottle of pale ale and took me to a field, where there were about 15-20 men. They then took me to a farmhouse near Vezon, where I got civilian clothes and shelter for the night. As the whole village knew of my presence, I was moved to Fontenoy, where I remained until 31 Aug. I then cycled to Tournai, where I was handed over to an organisation.

Statement by Sgt Jenkins. T.J.

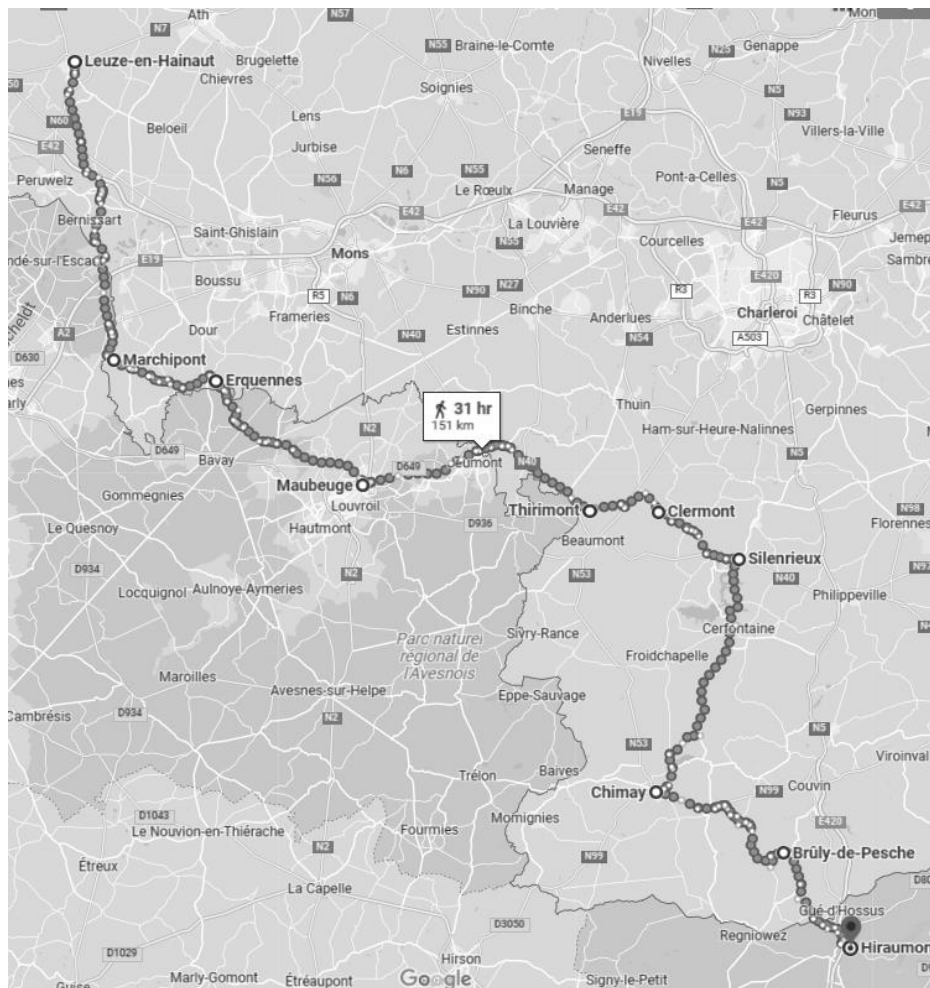
I came down at Thieulain, near Leuze, Belgium about 01.30 hrs on 25th Aug. I hid all my kit under a hedge and walked for about 4 hrs towards the French border. I went to sleep in an orchard and awoke to find someone beside me. This man took me into a house and I was given food and a bed. I was wakened about 19.00 hrs and taken to Tournai on a motor bicycle and handed over to an organisation.

Statement by Sgt Williams. H.

I came down on the outskirts of Leuze (Belgium) about 01.30 hrs. 25 Aug. I walked to a cottage about a quarter of a mile away. The people took me to a hiding place in the

woods and, during the few days I was there, brought me food and provided me with clothes and a map.

I then began walking south alone. I slept out, stopping at houses for meals and directions. None of those who helped me knew of organisations. The first stages of my route were: Leuze - Conde - Marchipont - Erquennes (S.W. of Mons). I crossed the frontier near Erquennes without difficulty. The original frontier signposts were still there, and there were very few Gendarmes about on either the Belgian or French side. *(Below is a map of just the first part of this herculean journey. Ed.)*



After crossing the frontier I skirted Bavay, and went on to Maubeuge. I then kept east and slightly south and re-crossed the frontier into Belgium east of Thirimont. From Thirimont my route was, Clermont - Boussu - Silenrioux - Chimay - Pesche - Bruly de Pesche - Le Bruly - Hiraumont.

I was again in France, having crossed the frontier between the last named places. My problem now was to get across the Meuse, so I went north through the Ardennes to Fumay, which lies between the frontier to the west and the Meuse on the east. Here I was arrested by gendarmes and taken to their office. They informed an

officer and he sent a message that I was to "...get out of the way... immediately".

Left; Sgt H Williams. (Photo courtesy of his daughter, Mrs V Wright)



I continued north and crossed the Meuse by the next bridge, which was just south of Vireux. I kept east from Vireux and again crossed into Belgium. I walked south by the following route: - Willerzie – Rienne – Louette St. Denis – Bellefontaine – Orchimont – Bohan. There I spoke with two old people who brought a man who spoke English. He said he had a friend at Muno (on the Belgian side of the frontier about 10 miles E.N.E. of Sedan), who might be able to help me. I went to this man, a local official, but he did not receive me very cordially, being chiefly interested in French P/W. He did, however, arrange for me to cross the border with two French escapers, with whom I went to Carignan. The hotel at which they were meant to stay refused to have me, as I was not French, but an Architect working on some new buildings put me up for the night.

Next day I went by tram to Charleville with a party of 12 French escapers. I spent two days in a lodging house and was provided with an identity card complete with photograph. I was described on the card as a deaf-mute. I was sent from Charleville to Besancon by train with a French escaper as a guide. On leaving Belgium I had 650 Frs got from farmers and peasants in small sums. With this money I was able to pay my railway fare to Besancon. In Besancon the man who was to have helped us was gone, and very soon my French companion disappeared.

Deciding to go on alone, I walked south from Besancon to the Line of Demarcation, which I crossed to Chamblay. I crossed the line at midday, when the guards are lax. The border at that point is a road, and the road and adjacent fields are patrolled. At Chamblay I was advised in a café to make for Lyons. I started walking again, and when I got to Ounans about three miles away, I met a man who put me in touch with an organisation. By this time I had been travelling for about a fortnight, almost all the time on foot, and had walked about 200 miles.

The two captured crew were held as POWs until the end of the war.

Sgt J B Downing – Prisoner of War - was injured in the Night Fighter attack and was unable to evade, so was captured. After he had been thoroughly vetted by the Germans he was given a second serial number to show his German POW Identity. He was probably initially placed in Stalag Luft LIII, in Sagan and Balaria, Germany (as was Flt Sgt Woods) before going to Stalag Luft LVI, (the L denotes that it came under Luftwaffe jurisdiction; VI is roman numerals used by the German to number their camps, in this case “Six”). LVI was Heydekrug in Lithuania. This camp opened in June '43 and closed in July '44 and Camp LVI was transferred to St Wendel in Germany in August '44, closing in September '44 on the approach of the Russians.

F/Sgt V S Wood - Prisoner of War - broke his ankle during his parachute landing and so was unable to evade. He was quickly captured (His POW number was 69103) and his POW camps in sequence are as follows: - LIII, Sagan and Balaria, Germany. LVI Heydekrug, Lithuania. LIV Beninia, Poland. LI Barth, Germany

(Note: Information from 'Footprints on the Sands of Time' (RAF Bomber Command Prisoners of War in Germany 1939-1945) by Oliver Clutton-Brock.)

The Belgian Assistance. Account by Belgium Helpers.....

“On (night) 24 Aug. 1942, an Allied plane had been shot down in Thieulain. Of its seven occupants, two were injured and five others tried to escape the German search. The village was surrounded. Learning that three of them had found temporary refuge in Fourths, we decided to go (and) look for them to try to make them go to France. On Aug. 25, we put our plan into execution. Roger went on a motorcycle at night and managed to bring back Thomas John Jenkins from South Wales, John Frederick Berthelsen and Geoffrey Robinson of London and Yorkshire.

Right: - Berthelsen and Jenkins with Micheline Fourez. 27th Aug 1942.



(Note: Information from a sprightly 92 year old John Berthelsen has stated that he is not actually in this photograph. It may be that the tall person on the left of picture is Geoffrey Robinson. Alan Frazer, Oct 2012)

While some left us pretty quickly, the first two found shelter with us for ten days. Ms. Bayet, who lived on the street from the Yser in Tournai, often brought them food. This was useful because, at that time, five people lived here. On Sept 5, Roger and René Donneux led the two airmen by train to Blandain. They also had along a German convoy. They moved to a safer shelter and returned to England as well.

They sent us a brooch representing an Indian head in remembrance of what we could do (had done) for them. While the British were here, a gun was hidden under the couch! Railway men carried it to the station of Tournai in a truck of the SNCB, to “be where it would be more useful.”

(Note: From “The house with Open Doors”. Nelly Radoux (called Micheline), wife of Roger Fourez. 116 rue Guillaume Charlier in Tournai. The gun referred to was probably Berthelsen’s revolver.)

Another account said: “The evading crew seem to have made their way - brought by local helpers - to the Lille area, which was a centre of activity for the Pat line at that time. According to Louis Nouveau's book, Jenkins and Berthelson were brought down to Marseille by Jean de la Olla (boss of the Pat line's Paris operation at that time) while Baker and Robinson were brought down by Nouveau himself. Williams seems to have evaded by himself for a couple of weeks, reaching Ounans near Dole before finding any organised help

Baker and Robinson are recorded at Louis Nouveau's on 2 September while Jenkins and Berthelson didn't arrive until 2 or 3 October. Note that although recorded by Nouveau, this was around the time of the big break-out from Fort de la Rivere and so many of the escapers and evaders were actually sheltered at other addresses in and around Marseille, Nimes and Toulouse for varying amounts of time prior to embarkation on Seawolf.

I don't have any details for Williams until the beach at Canet Plage but as he was there with the others from his crew I have to assume that he had also been sheltered in Marseille - possibly with Georges Rodocanachi - who didn't keep his own records.”

(Information from Keith Janes, editor of “Conscript Heroes” and Webmaster of the website of the same name.)

All five evaders were aided back to the UK by the PAO Escape/Evasion Line. Reports are held in the Public Records Office (Kew) under WO208. The five crew were returned to the UK following “Operation Rosalind” in October 1942.

The Escape Line. The Pat O'Leary (or “PAO” or “Pat”) escape line is best known for bringing escaping and evading servicemen down from the north of France to Marseille and then over the Pyrenees to Spain. The line began in late 1940 and in October 1941, the line was taken over by Pat O'Leary, the “nom de guerre” used by Belgian army doctor Albert-Marie Guerisse who had escaped to England in 1940, been trained by the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) and returned to France in July 1941. O'Leary used his own “PAO” line to get to Gibraltar in February 1942 and meet with representatives from MI9 (Military Intelligence Nine). A clandestine radio enabled the

organisation to arrange sea evacuations from southern French beaches to take men direct to Gibraltar.

The Return. It was on Operation ROSALIND that five of the crew started on their way back to Britain. The MI9 sponsored boat **Seawolf** (Capt. Lucasz) evacuated at least thirty-two servicemen, (including eighteen Fort de la Rivere escapers) one man who had escaped from Fort de la Duchere, thirteen evaders and at least one Pat Line man, Abbe Josef Mirda, who had been involved in the de la Rivere break-out, the night of 11/12 October 1942.

(Note: there has been some confusion over the identity of the ships involved in this operation; for clarification: - The 'Coast Watching Flotilla'.

A number of covert sections/Units used small boats to land Allied agents in the French Mediterranean and the French North African coast. They also embarked Allied agents and escaping POW's to and from Gibraltar. In all a total of 77 allied Agents and 635 Escaping POWS. At the start of the war these sections/units ran their own missions and due to the number of secret sailings and the fact that different British covert units were operating on the same enemy beaches at night, it was seen that problems were certain to crop up. Therefore it was decided to form the "Coast Watching Flotilla." This was established in early 1942 and a number of vessels were transferred to this unit: The trawler Tarana, the escort vessel Minna, the feluccas (wooden sailing boats) Dogfish, Vega, Seawolf, Calpe, Seagull, Seadog and Welcome, as well as submarines. The units that made up the new Coast Watching Flotilla came mainly from SOE (Spanish Section) who had been sent to Gibraltar in April 1941 to stay and disrupt the Germans (had they ever invaded Spain). They used local smugglers boats and their Spanish contacts and were soon infiltrating SOE agents into Spain for onward passage to occupied Europe. The senior officer of the C.W.F. was Captain C.B. Osborne R.N.R. and the submarine depot ship HMS Maidstone of the Eighth Submarine Flotilla based at Gibraltar provided any help she could to these little ships.

(HMS) TARANA was a former French trawler of 346t. In 1942 she was in the Mediterranean and there on three occasions (in May and June 1942) she co-operated with SEAWOLF. The SEAWOLF took the refugees (sic) from the beach and ferried them to TARANA, to be shipped to Gibraltar.

The SEAWOLF was a fishing boat operated by Polish Naval Mission from Gibraltar. There were 2 more boats operated by the Polish Navy (DOGFISH and SEADOG) with - mainly - Polish crew. Their main task was to pick up Polish soldiers from southern France, Spain and Northern Africa, but on many occasions she took other Allied personnel. The Polish Naval Mission was established after the fall of France and operated off Gibraltar until November 1943. During that time its 3 boats carried over 600 people.)

Operation Rosalind - 11/12th October 1942 "Details of Operation Rosalind are always associated with the famously long wait at Canet Plage following a missed rendezvous with Seawolf (Lt Michalkiewicz Lukasz). Unlike most previous evacuations, this was a single, dedicated SIS/MI9 operation. Following the Allied landings in North Africa on 8th November, and the subsequent invasion of the former ZNO by the Germans, it was also the last mass evacuation from the southern French coast.

However, Seawolf and her sister ship Seadog, continued with SOE and SIS operations to southern France until the end of the year, including Operation Portia (Seadog) which landed PAO radio operator Tom Groome at Port Miou the night of 3/4th November. It should perhaps be noted that Tarana crewman Ron Stephens has gone on record as saying that he and Tarana took part in this operation. He quotes the radio messages, credited to Seawolf by Richards as coming from Lt Lukasz's report, verbatim as well as the passwords published elsewhere as being used on this pick-up. Both Leslie Pearman and John Berthelsen describe the boat as a caique, and John also remembers a Polish crew and that there were no toilet facilities - Tarana had extra facilities especially fitted. (See note above)

The operation was planned to take place on the night of Monday 5 October and according to Lt Lukasz's report, Seawolf was off the River Tet estuary pickup point at midnight as agreed.

He says he patrolled a four mile stretch of shoreline for three hours, continually signalling the shore but got no reply. At 03.00 he withdrew and moved out to sea ready to try again the following night. Next night he returned, again at midnight, and patrolled for two hours until forced to leave the area by the arrival of what he suspected to be two patrol boats. At that point he decided to give up and sent a radio message to Gibraltar saying that he was coming home. At 11.30 on Friday 9th October, Lukasz received a radio message asking him to return to Canet Plage as the Rosalind people had been waiting for him two nights already. He turned his ship around and arrived off the Tet estuary at a quarter past midnight on Monday 12th October. This time his signal was answered immediately and he duly sent his dinghy ashore to start loading the escapers.

Why Seawolf and the shore party failed to make contact on either of the first two nights is not known for sure but there are some possible contributing factors. The pick-up point for Rosalind, although described as being Canet Plage, was changed slightly from the beach used for Operation Titania. This time the men were to be collected from further north, across the River Tet, which has two estuaries, both of which the escapers had to wade through, to what is today known as Ste Marie Plage.

Though Lukasz (who had also been aboard Seawolf for the Titania operation) is adamant in his report that he had the right beach on each occasion, it would have been very easy for Seawolf to make a navigational error. In Kradewski's report on Titania, he commented that the whole of this featureless coastline had lights shining from shore and he had great difficulty in distinguishing the shore party's signals. He based his approach on the red flashing lights from a fishing village some 4 kms north - presumably Barcarès - but it was the cries and singing they heard from the beach that confirmed he had found the rendezvous point.

It is also possible there was some confusion over the times themselves - were they using GMT or local time, which would have been two hours ahead of GMT. Ron Stephens says Tarana used local times when operating in the Mediterranean but I don't know if Seawolf did the same. On balance however, since the previous Titania operation went smoothly enough, either navigational error or inability to distinguish the shore party's signals, seem the most likely reasons. A total of thirty-two servicemen were picked up that night - eighteen escapers (mostly soldiers) from Fort de la Rivère,

and Pte Richard Watson from la Duchère, and thirteen evaders, all but two of whom were airmen. Josef Myrda, the Polish priest from Nice who had been instrumental in the de la Rivère escape and was by then brulé, was also taken off along with a French merchant navy officer". (Note:- The above is a précis from the book "Conscript Heroes")

This document has been compiled (& severely edited by me. Ed) by Alan Fraser with the aid of:

Mr George Worrall, who instigated this research and provided material
Mrs Vivien Wright, (nee Williams, Daughter of Sgt H. Williams)
John Johnston, who guided and advised me throughout this research
My thanks to them all. Alan Fraser. 149 Sqn Historian.

Sources:

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149 Sqn ORBs

RAF Lakenheath ORBs

Conscript Heroes. By Peter Scott Janes, edited by Keith Janes

Kraken Luftwaffe Archives

Dr. Theo Boiten's book, "Nachtjagd War Diaries," Vol 1.

The Bomber Command War Diaries: by Middlebrook & Everitt

The Stirling Story, by M.J.F. Bowyers

'Footprints on the Sands of Time' (RAF Bomber Command Prisoners of War in Germany 1939-1945) by Oliver Clutton-Brock.)

Acknowledgements:

Mrs V Wright (nee, Williams) Daughter of Sgt Williams

Keith Janes "Conscript Heroes", Editor

Bruce Bolinger WWII Netherlands Escape Lines

John Johnston "Strong by Night", 149 Sqn History.

Diana Morgan E.L.M.S.

Websites:

<http://www.stirlingpilot.org.uk>

<http://www.conscript-heroes.com>

<http://users.skynet.be/bk212103/hebergeur-fourez-radoux.html> (French)

<http://www.rafcommands.com/forum/showthread.php?10614-Stirling-W-7572>

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<http://www.asisbiz.com/il2/Bf-110/Bf-110-NJG4.7-%283C+LR%29-Kollak.html>
(English/Portuguese)

<http://www.ww2escapelines.co.uk/escapelines/>

I hope you enjoyed this insight into the bombing war as it was in 1942, through the eyes of one crew and one squadron. I think what comes over to me are four things.

- 1. The small number of aircraft in many of the raids, compared with later in the war.*
- 2. The number of times the crews were asked to return to the same target, night after night.*
- 3. That this was caused by the very poor bombing results, a fact that was beginning to dawn on BC as a whole.*
- 4. Finally, the loss rates, which thankfully and heroically, in this case, were lessened by the fact that five of the seven crew managed to return to England.*

Thanks Alan.

In July, I was very pleased to get an update on the work going on at The Hengrave Lancaster Project, from Alex Blackmore. Some of you may remember this was a project to recover the wreckage of XC Squadron Lancaster HK610 which crashed there on 2nd February 1945. The aircraft was part of a planned raid on Wiesbaden and was piloted by the squadron C/O Wing Commander Bannister. Sadly, having taking off from Tuddenham and whilst forming up with others from the squadron, HK610 collided with another squadron aircraft, PD336. HK610 crashed and exploded, killing all on board, whilst PD366 was able to return and land safely.



This picture is reproduced with kind permission of the HLP whose special thanks went out to Mr M. W. Brown who sent it to them. It dramatically shows the extent of the damage to Lancaster PD336, which managed to return to base with all crew alive. However, the rear gunner was severely injured and had morphine

administered whilst in flight.

The newsletter (which Alex and the team were keen for me to share with everyone) proclaims that "Since our last newsletter, we have managed to make contact with two more relatives of our aircrew which takes our total to 4 out of 8 which is a massive step closer to enabling us to conduct a site dig. With the nature of the crash being a pancake landing with a full payload of explosives, there are still a vast amount of human remains in and around the crash site. As a result of this, we must gain permission from living relatives to request and to gain consent to a site dig from the Ministry of Defence."

The second part of the project is to erect a fitting memorial to the eight brave young men who were lost that night. The newsletter continues: - "In order to erect the memorial, we must first find the land owner. Although we believe we know who this

is, we have no confirmed ownership at the present time. Secondly, we need to gain planning permission to erect the memorial.”

“It is our intention to hold a meeting with the Parish Councillors of Hengrave to discuss the building of the memorial, and to build a general consensus of the thoughts of those in the village regarding the building of a new memorial.

Thirdly we need to raise funds in order to source the materials and craftsmen and women to assist us in building the memorial. We would like to extend our gratitude to Jane Wilkie at Rees Pryer Architects for sponsoring this project and gifting us a plan of our memorial”.

Finally, a plea for any help you might be able to give: -

Volunteer We are always looking for volunteers to assist us along the way. If you would like to join the team please get in contact with us.

Donate If you would like to donate to support the project and the building of the memorial then please get in contact with us whilst we set up our Just Giving Page.

Share If you or a family member were in 90 Sqn at Tuddenham or at No.32 base RAF Mildenhall and have any information on our crew members or any stories of the crew, please do not hesitate to contact us.

E-mail: hengrave.lancaster.project@gmail.com

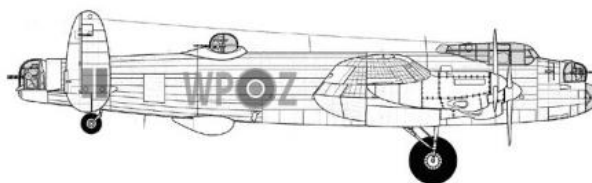


IN MEMORY OF THE AIRCREW OF LANCASTER BOMBER HK610 90 SQUADRON
R.A.F TUDDENHAM, SUFFOLK WHICH CRASHED AND EXPLODED ON 2ND FEBRUARY 1945
NEAR HERE FOLLOWING A MIDAIR COLLISION WITH LANCASTER BOMBER PD336 KILLING
ALL EIGHT AIRCREW ONBOARD

VICTIMS

W/C WILLIAM GEOFFREY BANNISTER - Aged 33
F/Lt HENRY ARTHUR WELLINGTON WILLIAMS - Aged 29
WO2 JOHN TRAIN (R.C.A.F) - Aged 20
F/Sgt ALAN MOORE - Aged 22

Sgt JEFFREY JAMES CHIDWICK - Aged 19
Sgt GEORGE LEONARD WEBB - Aged 20
Sgt DONLD FREDERICK LUXFORD - Aged 19
Sgt ROBERT SWAN - Aged 19



Another one of those ‘Mildenhall’ plates has made an appearance. When I met up with Sandra LaClaire from Saskatchewan, Canada she had pictures of the one her father in law, WO2 E.G. (Ed) Spannier DFC, a XV Squadron Bomb-aimer had bought.

Ed was born on the 17 June 1919 in Saskatchewan. The family home was in Claybank, Saskatchewan and he qualified as a teacher before war broke out. He enlisted in Regina on 4 May 1942. His training saw him graduate from No.2 ITS on 24 October 1942 and then No.3 AOS, from where he graduated 19 March 1943.

He then spent some time awaiting a posting overseas, which came through in May 1943. He was awarded the DFC effective 2 October 1944 as per London Gazette dated 17 October 1944 and AFRO 2637/44 dated 8 December 1944, by which time he had been; 17 November 1944. The award was presented to him on 18 May 1946, back in Canada, where he resumed his teaching career, following his service discharge on 16 March 1945.

The plate proudly hangs in Sandra’s home. (See picture on back page)

I was contacted through the website by James Glasspool, who wrote: -

“My father, James Glasspool, served at Mildenhall in XV Squadron during the war as a navigator in Lancasters.

I put together a simple website with his log book and his personal observations of sorties, details of crew etc and wondered if this could be added to your "Links to other sites" as might prove of wider interest, especially for those doing family or other research to help join the dots.

(It's an entirely non-commercial site I might add). The site address is": -

<https://www.lancaster-navigator.co.uk/>

“This website details information of just one of the “many” who served in RAF Bomber Command during the Second World War, navigator Jim Glasspool.

Jim flew in a Lancaster bomber with both 622 and XV Squadrons based in Mildenhall in Suffolk. You'll find details of his “ops” or operational sorties during the war, captured in his log book and notebook.

As Jim's son I put the website together to serve as a resource for those interested in the period, be they students, historians or anyone who'd like to know a little more of the men who flew during the war.

Right is a picture from the site of James in uniform, relaxing. (Courtesy of James Jnr.)

I thought it was a very professionally put together site. Well laid out and very informative. You might well like to take a look sometime.



Member John Watts, from Methwold; keen historian of all things 149 (East India) Squadron, proudly wrote in to say: -

“Our priest at St. George's Church, Methwold today told me that the 149 Roll of Honour, (which has been kept there) has been recognised by The Imperial War Museum and is now on their website for all the world to see”.

What a terrific honour that must be for this lovely little village church who have compiled and kept this safe for many years now. In the days when the Saturday outing always included a trip there, it was always on display. (Ed.)

Following the trip to East Kirkby, by the Swiss family Baumann and friends, Daniela wrote to me (and Malcolm and Sophie) with some further information about the night of the crash, which they hadn't realised existed. Found in their house loft, it

had been written by her grandfather soon after the crash, so a first-hand account and something new. It is transcribed here: -

“15 March 1944 Fritz Baumann, born in 1921, remembers: -

At about 10 p.m. a bomber aircraft circled over Golaten from the Jura. I heard the loud noise of an aircraft's engine. The cows became restless and the whole village came to life. Everyone ran out of the houses to search the sky. Suddenly we saw a four-engined plane at an altitude of about 200 m, without lights. It was making two or three circles in the sky. Then we heard a huge crash and flames rose to the sky.

Shortly afterwards, there was a terrible noise of exploding ammunition. Nobody really knew what was going on. We rushed towards Bärgli (Golaten's local mountain) to see what had happened. There we saw that everything was on fire in the rear part of the village, near the house of the Ernst Remund family. The plane was completely on fire.

The area was cordoned off by the local fire brigade. Later, the military also came.

The next morning when it got light, we saw a picture of devastation. There was a huge aisle in the forest. The first engine of the plane that had "blown off" was lying in the field near my apiary, which is close to the forest and a few hundred metres away from the plane wreckage.

There were many hundreds of rounds of ammunition near the various parts of the plane. Some of the ammunition and other things were collected by onlookers and taken home. Many people from out of town also came to Golaten to look at the destroyed bomber.”

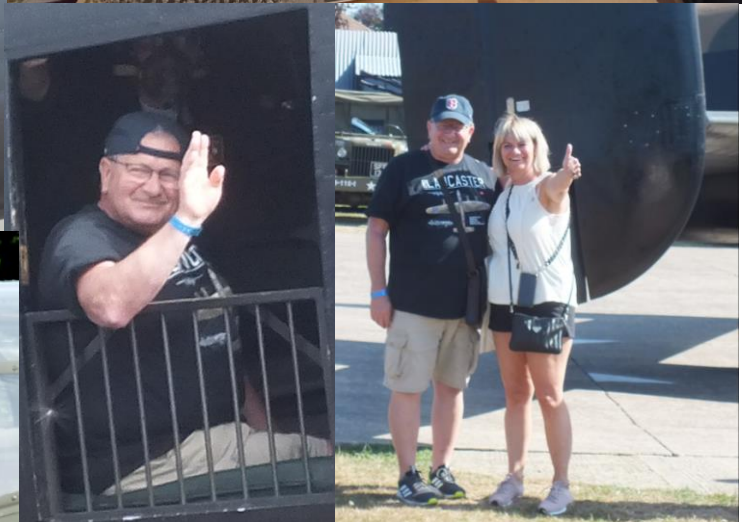
Daniela says they didn't know about the engine being blown over to the apiary, so they will be doing some further investigations in this area for further evidence. (Ed)

My grateful thanks to the other committee members who work so hard on your behalf. Also our amazing historians for their constant help in resolving member and enquirer research issues. Although the internet is very good these days, there's nothing like that 'personal' touch!

I'm always looking for interesting stories, so please do get in touch. All our contact details are contained in the box below or find us on the web. Geoff.

The Mildenhall Register Officers with Contact Details:

<u>Hon Chairman</u>	<u>Hon Secretary</u>	<u>Hon Treasurer</u>
Dee Boneham MBE	Geoff Reynolds	Smiley Mildwater
13 Holloway Crescent	61 Salem St	33A Hardwicke Fields
Leaden Roden	Gosberton	Haddenham
Dunmow, Essex	Spalding, Lincs.	Ely, Cambs.
CM6 1QD	PE11 4NQ	CB6 3TW
Tel 01279 877935	Tel 01775 841585	Tel 01353 749509



TL-The Plate; TR-The Cake; LC-Fritz and Sophie ride in Just Jane; AR-Sophie and Malcolm pore over a Squadron photograph; Fritz and Daniela before the off; L&R-Group shots

